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THE HUMAN MACHINE

An Inquiry into the Diversity of
Human Faculty in its Bearings
upon Social Life, Religion
Education, and Politics

BY J. F. NISBET

AUTHOR OF
'THE INSANITY OF GENIUS'
ETC.

'Nous sommes automate autant qu'esprit'
PASCAL

LONDON
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1899

19

PREFACE

A STRIKING feature of modern research is its tendency to harmonise and unify the results obtained in many independent, and, to all appearance, widely different lines of inquiry. Thus, while science on the one hand is trying to fathom the depth of the starry heavens, and noting through the spectroscope the composition of its innumerable suns, it is also investigating the properties of matter and grappling with the problem of energy, whereby it hopes to arrive at the great secret of life itself. Heat, light, energy, gravitation, electricity, chemical effect, life—all these are probably manifestations of one principle. What science is groping after is some universal key—a missing word which will light up the whole situation. Towards this universal generalisation we are moving along many converging paths. Whether the physicist, the chemist, and the physiologist will ever meet and shake hands at their common goal it is hard to say. Probably they will not, since there are fundamental principles in the universe which the human mind, in its present stage of development, is unable to grasp. I need name only two—time and space. And in the face of these mysteries the theologian is just as helpless as the materialist; for behind his First Cause must be another Cause and so on to infinity, which itself is unthinkable.

Preface

Nevertheless, the grouping of the scientific results arrived at is constantly widening our mental horizon. To Isaac Newton or the elder Herschel it must have appeared impossible—absolutely impossible—that human beings could ascertain with certainty the elements composing not only our sun, but the fixed stars, which are also suns of greater or lesser magnitude. Yet through the simple mechanism of a prism the apparently insoluble problem is solved. We know that practically the universe is composed of the same elements, solid or gaseous, as those with which we are familiar on the earth. This is perhaps the greatest generalisation which science can yet boast. But another, fraught with lessons of the utmost importance to ourselves, lessons physical, moral, educational, political and religious, is opening out before us—I mean the identity, or at least the interdependence, of mind and matter; and to the bearings of this upon our social conditions it is my object to call attention in the following pages. To be sure, the secret of life still eludes us. No one can say with certainty what constitutes the difference between matter in the living state and the same matter when it has ceased to live. We can only suppose that there is an atomic and therefore physical change of some kind, although of too minute a character to be detected; which is not surprising when we remember that the smallest living particle is considerably less than 100,000th of an inch in diameter.

In the discussion of mind, the vital principle has to be accepted as a postulate; but upon that basis a philosophy of a far more comprehensive character can now be built than was possible to the greatest intellects of the past, working as they did in the dark with regard to many

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fundamental truths which are now commonplaces of the laboratory and the lecture-room.

In the following pages, which I must leave in the main to speak for themselves, I endeavour to carry out to their logical extent, as regards society at large, the psycho-physiological principles indicated in my book on *The Insanity of Genius*. The result is to place mind and morals, as well as all physical faculty, upon a purely materialistic basis. That this may be unacceptable to many worthy people I am well aware. I am not unprepared to hear the dynamic theory of mind denounced as impious, though why one philosophical conclusion should be considered derogatory to the Deity rather than another I am unable to understand. I have never quite understood the people who object to Darwinism on the ground that the development of life from a primary cell is somehow a less masterly business than creating all existing species as they stand within a period of seven days.

As for materialism, it is a theory which seems to me to fit in better with the known facts than any other, and to leave the majesty of God just where it was before. To the belittling of the Creator, indeed, I do not see that anything is more conducive than the current theology—Roman or Anglican. Matthew Arnold's conception of the Trinity as three big Lord Shaftesburys sitting up somewhere in the sky is approximately that of every little boy and girl brought up on orthodox principles. Sometimes this image is replaced by that of the Israelitish Jehovah—a tutelary divinity in the form of a man, and swayed by such human passions as love, anger, pride, hate, jealousy. In either case the proportions of the Creator are reduced to those of an Exeter Hall philanthropist. How much

Preface

vaster and nobler is the materialistic conception of the Deity as an all-pervading force, impersonal in the human sense, but necessarily all-knowing because it is everywhere and in everything! How much higher than that of the anthropomorphic God! You may climb up to the top of Primrose Hill; you may shake your fist at the sky; you may take a Name in vain—and there is no response. Not the smallest—not even a flash of lightning! Because the unseen Power, whatever it may be, is not a ‘jealous God,’ animated by a paltry human resentment.

J. F. NISBET.

February 1899.

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CHAPTER I

All Physical, Mental, and Moral Qualities referable to the Brain and Nervous System—The Diversity of Faculty—Gladstone, Munkacsy, Daudet, Maupassant, Stevenson, Shakespeare—Athleticism and Genius—Phrenological Errors—Brain Mechanism—Thought and Emotion—Hypnotism—Acting and its Effect—Courage an Unintellectual Quality—Genius as a Form of Degeneration—The Average Man—The Effect of Voice—Point of View—Free-will.

BROADLY speaking, all manifestations of human activity, physical, moral, and intellectual, have their seat in the brain and nervous system. The living man is in some sort an automaton, acted upon by influences or stimuli derived from the outer world, through the channels of his senses, and whether he is long-lived or short-lived, healthy or ailing, a genius or a fool—in a word, sound or unsound according to the standard of his species—depends upon the relative efficiency of the cerebro-spinal mechanism with which he has been endowed at birth, or rather at conception.

To mind and body the same law applies. There is no longer any point in the learned judge's definition of a metaphysician as 'a blind man looking for a black hat in a dark room, the hat in question not being there.' The metaphysician is merged in the physiologist, and metaphysics is acquiring the same title as physiology, of which indeed it is a component part, to rank among the exact sciences. By the highest medical authorities it is now

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recognised that all manifestations of mind are results of cellular activity, and that not only so, but 'stimuli by efferent channels act in promoting the health and life or the disease and death of the body itself.'¹ Hughlings-Jackson remarks that while every part of the body has some degree of autonomy, it is yet 'in subordination to and controlled by the nervous system or some part of it.'²

To the fact that each of the manifold functions of the bodily and mental life has its appropriate seat in the brain and nervous system, and that these various areas are unequally developed in individuals, is due the diversity of faculty that we see. Where great inequality exists you may chance upon long life just as you may chance upon genius: for long life is only genius in the physical form. With genius there is apt to be a corresponding depression in some area—very often in the nutritive mechanism itself. Hence men of genius are found either very long-lived or very short-lived. It is their fate in one direction or another to run into extremes. Too often the great writer, painter, or musician is subject to some distressing physical affliction. More highly gifted than the majority of men in one respect, he is less well-equipped than they in other functions and aptitudes.

Amid the 'spontaneous variations' that occur in Nature's laboratory there is occasionally developed an exceptional all-round faculty. Of this, Gladstone may be cited as an example. With his towering ability in certain directions,

¹ Alexander Morrison: *Morrison Lectures*, Edinburgh, 1897.

² Among the processes at work Hughlings-Jackson includes 'regulation by chemical stimuli,' which explains the curious fact that one may feel clearer in intellect when gouty. Other medical authorities have pointed out that bodily pain and disease may 'directly contribute to the loftiest efforts of the intellect—may sometimes positively enhance its powers.'

Lopsidedness of Genius

the great politician and orator nevertheless combined a very high range of general capacity, and an exuberant vitality that carried him without a day's serious illness to the verge of nonagenarianism. Such a levelling up of faculty, intellectual and physical, is rare.

Of the general lopsidedness of genius (in common with other extraordinary developments of human faculty), it would be difficult to cite a more apposite or more painful example than that of the gifted Hungarian painter, Munkacsy, whose unhappy condition is the subject of current newspaper comment. Here we have genius running into downright insanity. The great artist lives, but, in the words of his wife, 'his soul is dead.' While Munkacsy's general health remains excellent, and his sleep normally good, his brain power is absolutely and hopelessly exhausted. His memory, we are told, is completely gone, and he often seems to have quite forgotten the art which has made him world-famous. The case is pronounced incurable, and so at the comparatively early age of fifty-two the artistic career of one of the greatest of living painters closes in gloom. Another recent example that may be cited is that of Alphonse Daudet. A novelist of rare charm, a dramatist of no mean order, Daudet was afflicted during his latter years with a loss of nerve power in the lower part of his body and legs—the terrible disease known to physiologists as locomotor-ataxy. He owed his faculty to the inordinate development of one portion of his nervous system at the expense of another. It will be remembered also that Guy de Maupassant, the gifted French novelist, died not long ago insane. No levelling up there! The same considerations explain poor Robert Louis Stevenson's physically ailing, intellectually brilliant

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life, and that of many another ornament of letters, science, and art.¹

That the sound mind does not necessarily go with the sound body is proved by a multitude of examples. Among these, by the great majority of people, Shakespeare is not thought to be included. The accepted view of Shakespeare is that, having amassed a fortune in London, he retired in health and strength to Stratford to enjoy a green old age, and that he was quite accidentally cut off by a fever at fifty-two. Nevertheless, I think the evidence, carefully sifted, points conclusively to Shakespeare's being one of Nature's physical weaklings. First, there is the question of the manuscripts of the plays, the poet's neglect of which on his retirement all the commentators, it seems to me, have misinterpreted. The received opinion is that he gave no thought to the manuscripts he had left in the hands of the players, but treated them as so much waste paper unworthy of preservation. As this implies an extraordinary lack of judgment on the part of the greatest poet, dramatist, and philosopher that the world has known, it is surprising that the meagre facts of the case should have been so little scrutinised by Halliwell-Phillipps, Karl Elze, and other latter-day commentators, because it seems to me they point to a conclusion diametrically opposite to the one generally entertained.

Inference for inference, it is more likely that Shakespeare was prevented from editing his plays than that he wished them consigned to oblivion. Even in those remote days, when reading was the luxury of the few, men had 'posterity' before their eyes. It was to posterity, it will be remembered, that Bacon (Shakespeare's greatest literary

For numerous examples of this kind see *The Insanity of Genius*.

The Case of Shakespeare

contemporary) intrusted the vindication of his character. Was posterity ever present to Shakespeare's mind? Once this question is asked, not one circumstance but a multitude of circumstances point to an affirmative answer.

First, as regards the literary quality of his work. It is inconceivable that a man of Shakespeare's judgment should have been blind to his own merits in comparison with those of his contemporaries and of the classic writers. His excellence was freely acknowledged in his own day; it is a mistake to suppose that it was not.

Secondly, there is very strong evidence in the plays themselves that they were written not solely with an eye to the two or three hours' traffic of the stage, which then, as now, was *réglementaire*. The probability is that Shakespeare had a reading public in his mind. In none of the plays is there anything which 'dates'—any mention of a contemporary statesman, soldier, sailor, poet, priest, man of science, nobleman, king, or queen. Yet those were the days of great deeds by land and sea; the old faith and the new were striving for mastery, and science was changing men's conception of the universe. Shakespeare treated only of the stable facts of history and the enduring passions of men. Things could not have been better ordered in works designed to be 'for all time.' A more important consideration still is the length of the plays. It is notorious that the great tragedies and many of the comedies have to be cut down by one-half or two-thirds in order to be brought within the compass of a three hours' performance. Of course, modern *mise-en-scène* and the division of the play into acts prolong the action a good deal beyond what the author may have intended. Whether any break was made in the course of the play

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in Shakespeare's time we do not know; but certainly his stage-managers were not hampered with movable scenery. Still, all due allowance being made on this score, and also for a more rapid delivery than modern actors cultivate, the plays, almost without exception, are far too long for the stage. It is impossible to read *Hamlet* through in such a manner as to be intelligible to an audience in less than five hours; most of the other plays require four hours or four and a-quarter, and that at a faster rate of delivery than, I think, any body of actors taking their cues from each other could adopt. With pauses such as probably were made even in the days of no scenery, the time occupied in the representation of a Shakesperean play in its entirety could not in the majority of cases have been less than five hours. The presumption, consequently, is that Shakespeare treated his subject with all the fulness of detail that suggested itself to his mind at the time of writing without regard to the technical requirements of acting. This is the more probable that many long passages consist of philosophical disquisitions or poetry that could not be regarded as dramatic or indispensable to the subject. Is it conceivable that Shakespeare, the practical dramatist, wrote these with no other object than that they should be cut and chopped about at the discretion of an ignorant stage-manager?

The third set of considerations bearing upon this question appear to me the weightiest of all. The preface of Hemynge and Condell, who printed the plays in the first folio edition, seven years after Shakespeare's death, contains the following:—

‘It has been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished

Shakespeare's Early Retirement

that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings ; but since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right,' etc.

These words are not at variance with the hypothesis that Shakespeare had intended to publish his collected works. Rather they point to such a purpose ; and Hemynge and Condell, be it remembered, were the poet's friends, and likely to be acquainted with his intentions.

Why, then, did Shakespeare neglect the duty of collecting and publishing his works ? Here we arrive at the crucial point. The common belief (started by Rowe, his first biographer, who wrote one hundred years after Shakespeare's death) is that the poet retired to Stratford on a competence to spend the latter portion of his life 'in ease and the conversation of his friends the gentlemen of the neighbourhood.' I venture to think the actual circumstances were very different. Shakespeare suddenly ceased work at the age of forty-eight. A few months previously he bought a dwelling-house in Blackfriars, presumably with the intention of living there. But towards the close of the year 1613 his plans were changed, and he buried himself alive in the remote, dull, unattractive town of Stratford. To suppose that he sought the society of the 'gentlemen of the neighbourhood,' with whom he could have had nothing in common, in preference to the merry gatherings in London in which Ben Jonson and other wits of the time took part, is absurd. Nor does the literary mind willingly cease producing at forty-eight. The most likely cause of Shakespeare's early and sudden withdrawal from the scene of his labours and literary interests was ill-health. He must have wished to be at home and to be nursed by his wife.

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This is my assumption, and it will be found to be in sinister accord with the known facts. Shakespeare did not belong to a healthy stock. He was one of a family of eight, of whom seven, including himself, attained an average age of only twenty-one years, the one long-lived member being his sister Joan. With all the insanitary conditions of life in those days, this is an exceptionally low average, only explicable on the assumption that Shakespeare, like so many men of genius, sprang from a stock physically unsound. As to the cause of his death the only information extant is the famous entry in the diary of the Rev. John Ward, of Stratford, who wrote in 1663: 'Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merrie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted.' Strange to say, this obviously spiteful piece of gossip has been accepted by all the biographers down to the present time. Medical science, however, rejects it. There is no fever, properly so called, which can be contracted by drinking, and Shakespeare's death, moreover, occurred two and a-half months after the 'merrie meeting.' Halliwell-Phillipps supposes the fever to have been typhus or typhoid; but in order to sustain this hypothesis he is obliged to tamper with the date of the signing of the poet's will on his deathbed. The dangerous seizure which caused the draft will to be signed as it had stood for months in the lawyer's hand, took place on March 25, the original word January being struck out and March written in. But the patient did not die for four weeks and a day, which is not the usual course of typhus or typhoid fever; and for Halliwell-Phillipps's suggestion that the melancholy gathering at New Place happened later than the 25th of March, the

Cause of Shakespeare's Death

day of the month in the draft will being 'left unchanged by an oversight,' there is no warrant whatever.

The fever hypothesis being inadmissible, of what, then, did Shakespeare die? There are facts from which a plausible inference on this point may be drawn. According to Hemynge and Condell the poet must in his prime have written with great ease, since there was 'scarce a blot' in his papers. But all his unquestionable signatures that remain are shaky enough to denote some sort of paralysis. The early Florio signature, authentic or not, is free from this defect, but in the signature appended to the lease in 1613 the shakiness of the hand is evident; in the signatures to the will a month before his death it is such that the name is hardly legible. Another fact demonstrating the probability of some affection of the nervous system is that in dictating the draft will drawn up by his lawyer in January 1616, Shakespeare failed to remember the Christian name of his nephew Thomas Hart, which accordingly remains blank to this day—a veritable oversight this! And failure of memory, together with unsteadiness of the hand, is, I need not add, the frequent precursor of a fatal paralytic or apoplectic attack. So far from passing the three and a-half years of his retirement in pleasant intercourse with 'the gentlemen of the neighbourhood' of Stratford, therefore, Shakespeare, I feel justified in inferring, was a martyr to ill-health, the victim of some sort of nervous complaint which betrayed itself in his handwriting before his departure from London. If so, the amazing hypothesis that he was so indifferent to the 'heirs of his invention' that he did not care to pass them on to posterity no longer holds water. That it should ever have found a moment's credence, indeed,

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is remarkable. How much more natural to suppose, in accordance with the above interpretation of the facts, that the same cause which impelled Shakespeare to throw down his pen at the early age of forty-eight prevented him from taking it up in his retirement! And how much more creditable to his judgment!

A defect of some kind in the lungs leads to consumption, in the brain to insanity. An excessive development of the optic apparatus, on the other hand, gives an exceptional eye for colour, which, combined with delicacy of touch, makes the artist. It may be, however, that an excess of vitality runs into muscular development, whence the possibly unwelcome conclusion that superiority in athletics or even in pugilism is essentially a form of genius similar in its origin to the poetic faculty, though differently judged. For while some anomalies of the nervous system are held in high esteem among men, and others reprobated, they all rest upon a similar basis.

To Gall, Spurzheim, and other early phrenologists is due the credit of discovering or suspecting the existence of some relationship between the mental and moral faculties, and the size and shape of the brain, though unfortunately the present-day 'professors' of phrenology have failed to keep abreast of modern discovery. The phrenological idea is that, given a bump on the skull, there is sure to be a mental or moral quality behind it. Whatever may be clear in psychology, the fabric of thought and sentiment assuredly is not so simple as that. On the upper portion of each side of the head the phrenologists locate a whole string of moral sentiments—namely, self-esteem, firmness, benevolence, imitation, wonder, hope, and ideality. Now this is the motor region of the brain, as we find by

Operations of the Brain

applying an electric stimulus to the convolutions indicated. It is the seat of clusters of nerve-cells controlling the movements of the feet, legs, arms, hands, head, face, mouth, and eyes. This discovery induced physiologists to throw aside phrenology as a piece of wretched quackery. Perhaps they went a little too far. One can confidently affirm that there is no special bump which is the seat, say, of benevolence, but it would be rash to declare that the motor area of the brain is not concerned in some way with the production of that sentiment. As regards the sensory areas of the brain! The convolutions lying at the back of the head are concerned with sight. This we know, because progressive injury to that portion of the brain results in partial or complete destruction of the visual faculty. There, however, the phrenologists locate the characteristics which they term inhabitiveness, adhesiveness, and philoprogenitiveness. What possible relationship can be established between such propensities and the organ of sight? Apparently none. Yet even here one must not dogmatise.

The truth is that the operations of the brain—the inter-workings of the various sensory and motor areas—are extremely complex. All that we know of the outer world is communicated to us through our five senses, each of which has its well-defined area in the brain; every muscular movement that we make is similarly controlled from a definite centre, and the whole of these are probably concerned in weaving the fabric of thought or emotion.

In the frontal lobes of the brain, the phrenologists locate the 'intellectual faculties.' Here the physiologist finds himself at fault. It is certain that this area is not the seat either of sense or movement. To the electric stimulus it yields no response. The physiologist can only suppose

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that it is a sort of clearing-house, where the raw material of thought and feeling provided by the sensory and motor areas is co-ordinated and worked up. When disease attacks this portion of the brain there is no loss of sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch ; no paralysis of movement. But there is a loss of judgment and of what may be called co-ordinated memory, so that in the present state of our knowledge the forehead cannot be better described than as the intellectual region. Yet the finest machine turns out imperfect work unless it is well supplied with raw material, and, in the case of the brain, the supply of such material comes from other areas, some of the most important of which are contemptuously spoken of by phrenologists as the seat of the 'animal propensities.' We are not justified, therefore, in my opinion, in attributing anything so complex as a moral or mental faculty to any one portion of the brain. Memory appears to be a faint revival of the nerve action excited by an original impression, and to the making up of such a complex sentiment, say, as benevolence a great many sensory and motor memories must contribute.

In dreams, due to a partial circulation of the blood through the brain, we have occasionally some experience of what thought would be unsupported by the memory of muscular movement or that of touch. If the visual or the auditory centre alone is stirred, we see or hear vaguely without knowing where we are. The momentary consciousness of being in some unreal world flashes upon us, but we do not think the experience strange, because all the checks of reason, which is 'memory' again, are inoperative. The clever brain, then, I should describe as one in which the intercommunication of the various areas was rapid

The Fabric of Thought

and extensive, while intellectual dulness must be due to the inactivity of the nerve-cells and their conducting fibres.

No absolute demonstration can be made of the operations of the brain in the weaving of the fabric of thought. If we could construct a machine that could see, hear, smell, taste, and feel, we should still be a long way from getting it to think. It would have the raw material of thought given it, but the process of manufacture would still remain the secret it has always been. Odd as it may appear at first sight, muscular action and physical movement probably enter very largely into all our conceptions. I do not see how we could obtain any idea of distance, of place, or of the shape, hardness, or other quality of things without our power of muscular action. If we looked out upon the world with a pair of eyes merely which had no complex brain action behind them, we could not see it otherwise, I imagine, than 'on the flat,' a confused mass of lights and shades and tints without meaning.

I believe we always require to bring into play for the interpretation of the picture our memories of movement, which cannot have their seat elsewhere than in those portions of the grey matter of the brain which control our physical action. The simplest idea that we form must, therefore, be contributed to by a great many sections of the brain.

Nor is the brain alone concerned in the production of our psychic states. The mass of feeling that goes to make up the Ego must be largely derived from bodily sources. It is pretty well established that everything in the nature of emotion is an effect produced by the circulatory system or some other of the organic functions of the body. The

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mind perceives a fact. Forthwith that perception induces bodily changes through the action of the heart or otherwise, and our feeling of those changes as they occur constitutes emotion. Such is the formula of the new school of psycho-physiologists. It has been shown by means of various ingenious instruments that the whole organism responds to every mental or physical stimulus, to every word and every touch, so that every intellectual effort, as well as every muscular movement, causes some redistribution of blood in the body; the heart, the whole circulatory system, and all the viscera and glands forming a kind of sounding-board from which every physical change at once reverberates upon the brain. To perceive a fact does not imply that a given person will feel exactly like any other person with regard to it. Some may look on unmoved at what others feel very keenly. It all depends upon the state of the vaso-motor vascular system; it is a question of sounding-board.

The coldest of cold observers would be a severed head. It would be a purely intellectual automaton, incapable of any motion whatever. Like a photographic plate, the brain would retain impressions, but it would found nothing upon them, and the Sphinx itself could not look down more dispassionately or unsympathetically upon the struggles of men than a severed head. A man whose leg has been cut off can still feel, or fancy he feels, the movement of his toes, and as the effect of all bodily functions is probably registered in the grey matter of the brain, I see no reason to doubt that a severed head might enjoy all the pleasures of memory. It might even form new combinations of old experiences, as we do in dreams. But it could not elaborate new ideas—it could not think out, for instance,

Hypnotism

the consequences of its severance from the body—because at the bottom of all our conceptions of space and time there is physical action.

The mechanical nature of cerebral action is aptly illustrated by hypnotism, all the phenomena of which are produced by suggestion conveyed to the patient's brain and nervous system. Apparently the hypnotic state is produced by the fatiguing of one or other of the senses, sight, hearing, or touch, whereby the cerebral mechanism is thrown out of gear, the result being that, while certain faculties are deadened, others are greatly stimulated, and the power of reasoning impaired or temporarily suspended. So little, however, has the operator to do with the phenomena, that a susceptible subject may be hypnotised by voluntarily staring at a bright light, by listening to the ticking of a watch, or by allowing a bit of shining glass to catch his eye in the street. As for 'suggestion,' that is usually conveyed in words, but it may equally be conveyed through sight, smell, taste, or touch, *e.g.* as when a pillow, placed in the patient's arms, arouses the idea of a baby. It is only with certain organisations that hypnotic effects of such intensity can be obtained, but everybody who has fallen into a 'brown study' or reverie may be said to have some experience of hypnosis in its early stage. This mechanism of emotion—joys, sorrows, and the like—may be called into action by the merest trifle. Nothing is more effective in this respect than the inflection of a voice. It is the penny in the slot. It touches the mechanism *instantly*. An actor who knew how to use his voice could bring tears into one's eyes by repeating in an anguished tone the words, 'Alas! poor boy'; and I am sure that Madame Sarah Bernhardt could

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do wonders in the way of pathetic effect by merely reciting the multiplication table or the rules of grammar.

The human machine is built to act in a given way. As it is built, so it yields its appropriate product in literature, art, science, or what you will. Assuredly it cannot be trusted to turn out all kinds of work equally well. As the French say, *on ne peut pas tout avoir*. I doubt whether Shakespeare could have fought the Spaniards as valiantly as Drake, and I am sure that Drake could not have written a good *Hamlet*.

Histrionic genius, it seems to me, differs from the accepted kinds of genius in being far more physical or mechanical than intellectual. It is concerned not with the elaboration of thought, but mainly with its expression in voice, facial action, and gesture.

Perhaps the most purely intellectual of the forms of genius is the literary, because there no mechanical qualities are needed; the voice may be harsh, the hearing obtuse, the gesture inexpressive, the gait awkward; even the handwriting may be execrable. The musician, on the other hand, must have gifts of ear, and if an executant, of touch, in addition to the intellectual powers concerned in composition. Without these latter he will be a brilliant executant merely. The painter, again, must have an eye for colour and a special gift of touch, unless, like Ruskin, he settles down into art criticism, wielding the pen instead of the brush. In other walks of life—the military, the commercial, and so on—certain qualities of manner or physique are needed in combination with head gifts. But the great actor may dispense with intellectuality. He need not feel more deeply than anybody else; he need not have a wider range of feeling. He must be able to give his feeling

Intellectual and Mechanical Genius

eloquent expression—that is all. The physical qualities thus called into play approximate more to the genius of the great athlete than to that of the brilliant man of letters.

No one can study the art of Madame Sarah Bernhardt or Madame Duse, to take the two greatest actresses of the day, without feeling how infinitely important a part of it lies in the voice and the enunciation alone. As for gesture, one can see sentiment flowing out to the actresses' very finger-tips. What there is of intellectuality in the art of acting consists in the composition of character. But neither Madame Bernhardt nor Madame Duse varies her types of character to any great extent. It is their personality that dominates everything. They are greatest when they are themselves, *i.e.* wonderful instruments for the expression of sentiment.

Every one of our gestures, every act, however simple, is produced by a very elaborate set of nerves and muscles acting in cohesion, geared up like parts of a complex machine, so that a stimulus communicated to the combination at any point sets the whole in action. In insanity, where every portion of the nervous system is liable to derangement, cases occur of uncontrollable grief or uncontrollable joy without the application of any external stimulus. Now we have all in our system a mechanism of grief or joy, susceptible of being played upon by external circumstances; and the artificial stimulus needed to wake it, it is the business of the dramatist and the actor directly, and of the novelist and the poet indirectly, to apply.

Physical courage, a much esteemed quality, offers a curious study to the psychologist. With the best inten-

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tions in the world, I am afraid I cannot rank courage as an intellectual quality. A man who is mentally alert, shifty, cunning, or even well-informed, and therefore able to gauge pretty accurately dangers he is called upon to face—an intellectual man, in short—is extremely unlikely to distinguish himself on the battlefield. Courage! We admire it, we vaunt it, we strike medals, and raise monuments to glorify and commemorate it, and yet it is a quality which belongs far more to primitive than to advanced races. The most fearless courage in the world is shown by naked savages ignorant of the effects of modern rifle and artillery fire. Their courage very much resembles that of the war-horse which gallops up blindly to a hostile battery. Nobody speaks of the courage of the horses of the noble ‘Six Hundred.’ Yet they carried the heroes into action and suffered as heavily. It may be said that the horses of the Light Brigade at Balaclava were not intellectually alive to the risks they were incurring, and that is true. But what if courage in man should be a quality closely allied to the obtuseness of the war-horse? Fuzzy-Wuzzy of the Soudan is a ‘first-class fighting man,’ and so is the naked Zulu, as our army has good reason to remember. Nevertheless the intellectual attainments of the black races of Africa are small.

Among the riff-raff of our slums courage abounds. In fact it is the commonest of all the qualities. Notoriously half-civilised troops fight well behind fortifications. Why more so than, say, a Royal Academician or an eminent *littérateur*? Because to their simple minds the defences seem to offer more protection than they do. Most men, indeed, finding themselves in a shower of bullets, would rather have the protection of an umbrella than nothing,

Courage

though a very little reflection would show them the vanity of that. The born hero does not keenly realise that a bullet could hit him at all. Only in a vague sort of way does he think of danger, and then he readily persuades himself that he will be one of the seventy-five per cent. who escape safe and sound from the bloodiest battlefields.

If soldiers possess unlimited confidence in their generals and other superiors, they may, even with a fair perception of the horrors and the general futility of war, stand firm. At bottom, nevertheless, that is only another form of the blindness to danger we have been discussing. Confidence in their commanding-officers inspires them with a sense of security, which may or may not be well-advised. It was a lack of confidence in their leaders that helped largely to ruin the French in their great struggle with Germany, and the same failing, essentially an intellectual one, was at the bottom of the disasters suffered by the Greeks in their latest campaign against Turkey. I have no doubt but that an army of Soudanese blacks, unable to judge of the competence of their officers, would have made a better stand at Larissa than the so-called descendants of the heroes of Thermopylæ and Marathon, who are really too wide-awake, too selfish, and too imaginative to make good soldiers. I am not forgetting the courage that is born of conviction in the righteousness of a cause—such courage as animates the Boers of the Transvaal and as characterised Cromwell's Ironsides, who carried a Bible in one hand and a musket in the other. But there also lack of mental adaptability must exist.

In the face of danger some men's resolution gets set, so to speak, in a vice. They stick to the post of danger

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because they are there. They could not run away if they would. For the time being their active faculties run in the fighting groove and will take no other. This is a sort of courage not far removed from that of the bull-dog, which would be hacked in pieces rather than yield; and it has a good deal in common with obstinacy, which is often manifested to an extraordinary degree in children of an hysterical temperament.

The courage of the successful general who not only throws himself fearlessly into the fray, but launches columns and columns of men into certain death, is too often founded, I believe, upon mere callousness, or indifference to human life, which again is translatable into lack of imagination or lack of sympathy. Sometimes minds of this order exhibit extraordinary vagaries. A murderer who has ruthlessly taken the life of a fellow-creature will tame and treat with the utmost tenderness a mouse in his cell; and from Moltke's diaries we learn that while that great commander had no scruple in sacrificing fifty thousand lives for a strategical advantage, he was greatly shocked by seeing horses and donkeys maltreated in the streets of London. Women are especially subject to such combinations of excessive sensibility and obtuseness. There are those who could not be persuaded to kill a fly, but who would have no hesitation in touching a knob contrived to blow up a city in South America. This means that, while they shrink from suffering lying before their eyes, they have not imagination enough to realise the horrors of a distant catastrophe. Probably Moltke would have been unable to order bloodshed on a large scale had he been obliged to take an active part in it.

Finally, courage may be inspired by patriotic tradition,

Courage

or by the operation of the principle of *noblesse oblige*. Perhaps this is the most estimable courage of all. It has often been manifested in England's wars by striplings of officers, who, appointed to important posts, felt that, with the eyes of the country upon them, they must do or die. Even in the rank and file of the fighting forces tradition is all-powerful, as Nelson well knew when he hung out his famous signal at Trafalgar.

Derogatory though they seem, for the most part, to courage, these views are confirmed by an examination of the records of the Victoria Cross. Courage, one sees at a glance, is not the monopoly of the classes. A very large number of the Victoria Cross men are simply privates, who probably did not know that they were doing anything wonderful until it was done. In the hour of emergency they acted as their instincts impelled them to do, and the reports of their superior officers commending their bravery did the rest.

Nor is courage a question of physical size, though one is apt, for some reason, to associate deeds of daring with brawny limbs and mighty muscles. Lord Roberts, who is a little man, won the Victoria Cross in the Indian Mutiny by cutting down a desperate Sepoy with his sword at the right moment; which prompts the historian of the order to the reflection that 'strange surprises would await us if every one of the four hundred odd Victoria Cross men could stand before us in the flesh.'

In an account of the New Zealand campaign of 1860 it is stated: 'On one occasion the Captain, having fired at a brown head that peeped above the parapet, searched for the man inside when the Pah had been taken, and discovered him with a ball between the eyes; his leg,

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broken in a previous engagement, having been roughly bound up with flax, and a tent peg by way of a splint, so that he might go on fighting to the end.' Truly this nameless savage was a brave man in the accepted sense of the term.

How many men in cold blood would go into an engagement with the assurance that, whether the fight was lost or won, they would bite the dust? I venture to think that such a test for courage would be a severe one. There would be some to stand it, no doubt, but few.

A remarkable case bearing upon the intellectuality of courage is that of Piper Findlater, known as the hero of Dargai. Findlater was shot through the ankle while his regiment were gallantly charging the Afridis, but he continued, nevertheless, to play until he fainted from exhaustion. Forthwith praise of the 'brave Gordons' resounded throughout the length and breadth of the land, and bravest of all was Piper Findlater. But lo! the inquisitive interviewer presents himself, seeking to know the why and the wherefore of the glorious exploit. Being questioned as to his experiences on the historic occasion, Findlater confessed that he did not exactly know how he became a hero, and had no advice to offer those who would follow in his footsteps. When his regiment received the order to take the enemy's position, no particular train of thought passed through his mind. Did he flinch at the thought of the fire-swept zone that had to be crossed? 'No,' was Findlater's answer. 'I don't recollect anything further than this—how quickly could we get across.' He made a dash with the rest; and then occurred the particular act of gallantry which has made him famous. 'Suddenly,' said Findlater, 'my right leg gave way

The Hero of Dargai

under me and I slid down in a heap. There was no pain, there had been no shock, simply my leg was broken.' No pain! yet the bullet had gone through the ankle at a downward slant, breaking the main bone in its progress. But the playing—what of that? the interviewer asked. Why, being wounded, did he continue to play? Findlater confessed that he could not explain. Simply, he did play. 'I was there to play, and I suppose anybody would have done the same. My pipes slid off my shoulder as I fell, but I managed to get my back against a stone, and thus could play. The last I remember I was still getting out the tune; then I fainted.' The palaver of the press, the acclamations of his countrymen, and the receipt of the Victoria Cross followed, and that is all that Piper Findlater knows.

Let me add a fact which probably deserves more attention than it originally received in the police reports from which I extract it. On November 11, 1896, the London County Sessions had to deal with a ruffian named Collis, charged with an assault upon children. His record was of the worst. He had left the Indian police service under suspicion of aiding and abetting criminals. From the London Corps of Commissionaires he was discharged for 'irregularities.' He was a bigamist, having married three women; he had been engaged to a fourth, and had betrayed a fifth. One of his victims he swindled out of £50, and on her complaining he threw her out of a window. He had committed numerous assaults upon children. The medical officer of Holloway said Collis was of a low type of intellect, but perfectly sane, upon which the prisoner was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Who was this blackguard? A bearer of the Victoria Cross for

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valour, won for saving a gun at the battle of Maiwand, in Afghanistan.

Genius, of whatever kind, is commonly regarded as an insoluble problem, and so it is, no doubt, if we seek its ultimate cause. In the last resort all thought and action is a movement of molecules, and why these should move one way rather than another it is impossible to say. But, starting with that assumption, it is possible, I think, to know something more about genius than purely literary critics have ever been able to tell us. The reason why genius is accounted so much of a mystery is that the world has been accustomed to look at it from the wrong side. It is not a question for the literary critic at all, but for the physiologist. We may talk endlessly about wealth of imagination, sense of the beautiful, style, and the capacity for taking pains, but these things will never help us forward in our inquiry, for the simple reason that they are none of them causes, but only effects.

The first thing we discover about ourselves on self-analysis is, that we have not all the same abilities in the same degree. One boasts a turn for figures, or drawing, or music, which another has not; one has a preference for athletics, another for study; one has an active, another a sluggish liver; one is stout or thin, well or ailing. There is no end to the diversity that obtains among men, intellectual, moral, and physical. It is not enough to say, for instance, that the memory is good or bad. There are different kinds of memory—memories of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, the last two very faint in the human subject, though probably the most active in certain animals and insects. I myself have a tenacious memory for things read, and the poorest possible memory for faces;

Excess and Deficiency

so much so, that I remember for a lifetime the page and the part of the page of a book in which I may have read a fact of interest, and wholly forget the face of a casual acquaintance.

Such differences of faculty must have been known since ever men engaged in any sort of competitive pursuit—war, the chase, literature, art, science, or athletics. Only within the last twenty years, however, during which time the localisation of function in the brain and nervous system has been ascertained by vivisectional experiment, has it been possible to couple such varying degrees of ability with a special development of this or that cerebral or spinal centre. It is now tolerably plain to the psychophysiolgist that a man prefers to employ the faculties he is exceptionally gifted with, just as the tiger instinctively uses its claws, or a stag its sense of smell. Not only so, but the excessive development of one faculty or one nervous centre is usually accomplished at the expense of another, so that, broadly speaking, a man of exceptional intellect is seldom a good athlete. For the nerve-cells of the brain and spinal system regulate not only the intellectual and motor processes, but also the growth and nutrition and general working of the body.

Nature, as Emerson puts it, deals out so much clay and fire to make a man; and if, in the mysterious blend of the germ-plasm at conception, the proportions happen to be ill-regulated, the man is turned out accordingly—a Hereules or a pigmy, a genius or a fool. Long life and short life, health and disease, are dependent upon the same conditions. A general levelling up of faculty to the highest attainable point is a rare, perhaps an unheard-of, phenomenon; equally so is a general levelling down.

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Genius is mostly, as I have said, lop-sided. There are many forms of it, and to the making of each form there goes a delicate combination of faculty. But taking the whole system, bodily and mental, genius has one almost unfailing characteristic—with an excess in one region, there is some deficiency of nerve function in another.

An argument occasionally put forward on behalf of Socialism is that the lack of leisure among the working classes is unprofitable to society, by preventing genius from asserting itself at many points where it probably exists. It is a fascinating assumption. Unfortunately it does not bear scrutiny. Genius lacking its opportunity is somewhat in the position of the beautiful statue imbedded in the block of Carrara marble, and only awaiting the hand of the sculptor to chip it out. After all, in this sort of inquiry it is desirable, as far as one can, to walk upon the solid ground of fact, and I would say that the first proof genius gives of its existence is its triumphing over the initial difficulties in its path. Up to that point it is not genius, but merely good intention, which is a very different thing.

That genius, so far from being the result of education, is as likely to manifest itself in one social stratum as another is, however, very true. Among poets, could any have made a more unpromising start than Shakespeare with his little Latin and his less Greek, handicapped by an injudicious marriage, and compelled to go out into the world and seek a living in his teens? Or Burns, who wooed the muses at the plough's tail? Or Coleridge, or Wordsworth, or Scott—all of whom had to battle either with poverty or with uncongenial surroundings? What would-be painter, again, can successfully plead want of opportunity, when one remembers that Sir Joshua Reynolds

Dr. Smiles' Theories

developed his faculty in an obscure Devonshire village, away from art of every kind, and that Turner began life as a barber's boy, and found his first opening as a colourist in washing in the blues and yellows of an architect's plans ? In music, what of Handel, or Wagner, none of whose relatives played, even as the young lady of the suburban piano plays ; in fiction, Dickens ; in mechanics, Robert Stephenson ; in science, Faraday ; or in the military art, Napoleon, who was the son of a Corsican lawyer's clerk ?

Dr. Smiles, in his famous biographies, tells us how we might all be great poets, or inventors, or philanthropists, if we chose. If we chose ! There's the rub. What Dr. Smiles omits to tell us is why some choose and others do not ; or, in other words, why some have the faculty and others have not of taking up the various distinguished careers held out to them. If he showed us that, there would, I fear, be an end of his admirable thesis, because he would be obliged to recognise that not only the more positive attributes of genius, but even the faculty of perseverance or industry which enters so largely into many kinds of intellectual supremacy, though not into all, is a natural endowment depending upon certain inborn combinations of nerve-cells and fibres in the brain and spinal system. What Dr. Smiles preaches is a sort of intellectual Socialism—a general equality theory, which is as false in the intellectual domain as it is in the physical. As well tell a puny hunchback that he may, by taking thought, become an Adonis, as a youth of stunted mental capacity that he has it in him to be a Milton or an Edison if he tries. Dr. Smiles might, in short, with equal propriety and, I believe, with equal effect, try to teach us all how to be notorious criminals as how to rival the great men

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who swarm in his philanthropic pages. So far as the biographical facts go, of course I am with him. What they prove to my mind is that the secret of genius, like that of crime, and indeed all mental and physical divergencies from the average, lies too far below the surface to be got at either by the schoolmaster's cane or the preacher's maxim.

The common argument against the degeneration theory of genius is that many people are degenerate without enjoying the smallest literary or artistic distinction. That is so. It is only in a small number of cases that the excitability of the degenerate brain takes the form of literary or artistic creativeness. Much of the special energy may be wasted, or it may drift into vicious channels. Besides, there are not only the *plus* but the *minus* forms of degeneration, and while the *plus* may run up into the highest genius, the *minus* may descend into the most distressing forms of imbecility. The medium brain is, of course, neither that of the genius nor the imbecile. It yields the sound average intelligence belonging to the race, but it would be vain to look to it for great creative works of art. Even amongst the lowest races we find varieties of ability. There is not a savage tribe upon the face of the earth that does not throw up its man of genius after its own fashion. For genius, like so much else, is judged by its circumstances. The Zulu Mozart, or the Papuan Michael Angelo, would make no show at all among his own people, whereas the corresponding Napoleon would at once come to the front. Certain conditions of society must exist before certain kinds of mental capacity in a given race can assert themselves.

‘Sports’

Doubtless the human race has always a fringe of degenerates belonging to it, the product of those ‘spontaneous variations’ first noted by Darwin, but inherent to life in all its forms. There is no reason to suppose that this fringe is greater at one period than another, though probably the conditions of life during the past sixty years have thrown into greater prominence the peculiar class of mind that dabbles in literature and art. Just as the Zulu Mozart, with his possibly puny physique and over-sensitive nervous system, becomes a mere despised camp-follower among a rude and warlike race, so in a society which cultivates æstheticism every minor poet and every colour-impressionist gains an undue importance.

Taking a list of famous men whose height is known accurately or approximately, it is found that the tall and the short are in the majority. Men of genius seldom run on average lines as regards height, and if they do they often exhibit anomalies of growth, such as big heads, short legs, excessively robust or frail bodies. In fact, the man of genius is a curious haphazard combination of a vast number of anomalies, *plus* or *minus*, and this is the reason why no attempt can be made to breed him artificially.

Speculating, one can only suppose that not only the mental processes associated with the different areas of the brain, but also all the physical processes concerned with growth and nutrition are governed by the grey matter contained in the skull and spinal column, and that where you get genius, *i.e.* exceptional ability, of one kind or another you have nerve-cells accumulated in one or more areas of the system at the expense of other areas. In other words, the possession of genius implies an unequal distribution of the nerve-cells of the mysterious grey matter which

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appears to be the seat and source of vital energy. This would account for variability not only in stature, but in all the other respects in which men of genius differ from the ordinary run of their fellow-men. It would also lead to the conclusion that genius is not on the whole a sound condition of mind or body, but a capricious variation, or what Darwinians call 'a sport.'

A remarkable example of the partial genius was that of the Italian shepherd boy Inaudi, who visited London a few years ago. His genius was for numbers. He had a broad forehead and a great development of the auditory area of the brain which is situated over the ear. He took in his figures not by the eye, but by the ear; in fact, he showed comparatively little expertness in calculation with figures submitted to him in writing. Before he could proceed with his mental arithmetic he required to have the problem read aloud to him, or to read it aloud to himself. Having done this, he was able to recall long strings of figures at will, his ear-memory for these being prodigious. 'I hear the numbers,' he said, 'and it is the ear that retains them. While I am trying to reproduce them from memory they sound inwardly with the tone of my own voice, and I continue hearing them for a good part of the day. Hours after hearing a number I can in this way repeat it exactly.' So much for the auditive portion of Inaudi's faculty. It is evident that the hearing centre of his brain was extraordinarily sensitive. And yet his memory for words was not abnormal. He had an ear for figures alone, which is curious as showing the wonderful subdivision of faculty in the brain. It is probable that without a power of sustained attention the mere sensitiveness of his hearing would not have helped him

A Phenomenal Calculator

greatly in his calculations; but he had that gift too, as the great extent of his frontal lobes implied, and this combination of faculties gave him a veritable genius for arithmetic.

What happens with certain portions of the brain could conceivably happen with all portions. Suppose this little Italian shepherd boy had been intellectually levelled up all round to the extent that he was in respect of numbers, what a prodigy he would have been! A Shakespeare in literature, a Reynolds in painting, a Mozart in music, a Kean in acting, a Chatham in oratory, a Pitt in politics, a Napoleon in war, a Newton in science, and many things besides. Such a demi-god we are not likely to see, but it is within the bounds of possibility that, in the ages to come, the more advanced portions of the human race may reach that higher plane of development, and still have its geniuses, its exceptional offshoots, peering into the mysteries of nature beyond the common ken. Such a development is hardly likely to come about; indeed, I am inclined to believe that humanity will never be much better or wiser than it is, and that the social forces now at work tend rather to deterioration than advancement. I say merely that among the infinite chances of the future this is one. Observe that this shepherd boy's powers as a calculator asserted themselves without any training whatever. He learnt the names of numbers by ear, and was able to do prodigious calculations before he could read or write. He took to figures as naturally as a duck takes to water, and his system of arithmetic, which far transcends that of books, was entirely his own. It is like the sword of Achilles; no man but himself can handle it. The 'phenomenal calculator,' like the poet, is born, not made;

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and so is every man of genius or talent who rises above, together with every knave or fool who falls below, the ordinary level of ability.

It may be said that our every thought and action proceeds from an impulse in the brain and nervous system, and that our general disposition—our tenderness, our hardness, our faith, our cynicism, our philanthropy, our avarice—is the balance struck, unconsciously to ourselves, between all our conflicting experiences and feelings, the result depending of course upon our nervous fibre, as the tone of a bell depends upon its casting. As there are bells of all notes, so among human beings there are natures of every quality. The generous man gives for the purpose of relieving his own feelings, harrowed by the spectacle of suffering; the miser procures himself the gratification of saving a coin that some other man might give away.

On the score of motive, consequently, every man does that which it suits him best to do, which, on the whole, gives him the most gratification, even though it should be accepting the pains of martyrdom, or poverty, or sending a large anonymous donation to a charity. From this point of view, the subject of charity alone might supply the cynic with endless matter for disquisition and moralising. This only I will say, contrary though it may be to outward appearance, that charity does always begin at home, in the sense that it is a movement designed to relieve or to gratify the feelings of the donor. We perceive, or we become aware of, distress that wants relieving, and, having the means to relieve it, we unconsciously enter into a calculation as to whether the sense of doing good is a fair equivalent for what we propose to deprive ourselves of. The answer in such a case will depend greatly upon

The Average Man

temperament, under which I would include the range and delicacy of our perceptions, and the vividness with which we can realise the suffering of others. If the balance of advantage is in favour of giving, we give; if it is not, we don't. The facts being the same, one person will decide in one way and another in another. An animal of poorly developed brain will pass by a wounded and dying friend without feeling any charitable promptings whatever. It sees all that there is to see, the receptive brain acting the part of a photographic plate; but the sensorial impression conveyed does not arouse in the brain past experiences of a similar kind or deductions formed from such experiences, and there is consequently no emotion felt because the various centres of the brain are not closely coupled up. The uncharitable man, therefore, is one in whom associated ideas with regard to suffering are not strong, though such ideas may be strong enough in relation to other faculties. In proportion to the efficiency and extent of its connections, one brain is rich and another poor in memories and ideas. We may pity a man in whom sights and sounds call up few associations, whose mind, like the photographic camera, may register impressions, but does not combine them into thought—we may pity such a man, I say, but we can hardly blame him. And so it is with the misanthrope, who looks out upon the misery of the world, and is unmoved thereby. He acts as we all do, in accordance with his organisation; it is his misfortune (if it is not his gain) that he should be less sensitively constituted than others.

With all the diversity that obtains among human beings, there remains a general average of faculty which is as well-marked intellectually and morally as it is in height or

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weight ; and to this the actor, the novelist, the artist, the orator, all who strive to influence the masses, must appeal. What the average of mankind do not feel, or are incapable of feeling, is not truth to them. What, on the other hand, may appear as truth to a small section of mankind, is not necessarily truth to the rest, and these cannot be blamed for not accepting it as such. This, it will be seen, excludes the modern actor's pretensions to educate his public, since that only appears to us to be true in acting—a gesture, a look, an intonation, a conception—which we already and intuitively know to be true: it follows that the actor who most excites our admiration does not educate us at all, but at the most merely confirms us in our opinion. That the real ring of human nature on the stage will always find a sympathetic response in the house is certain, because, *au fond*, the audience are made of the same material as the actor, and are capable of feeling exactly as he does, though they may not possess the gift, like him, of expressing themselves so as to be understood by their fellows. However subtle or forcible may be the sentiments conveyed by the actor, they must be such as are already felt or known by his average auditor to be true. We never applaud the actor so heartily as when he does something which to us is familiar. When, on the contrary, he does something unfamiliar, new, strange—that is to say, when he gets upon the educational tack—we are disconcerted and nonplussed ; he is doing what we do not feel to be true. In fact, truth in any shape is only a mode of feeling, so that what is truth to one individual, or even to one species, is not necessarily truth to another.

Not only on the stage, but in the pulpit, on the platform, and in the councils of the nation, is quality of voice

Acting and Oratorical Effects

all-important. It even counts for more than we suspect in the relations of daily life. One may be thrilled to the marrow by an intonation which has no real emotion behind it. The speaker's power to move us depends upon his being able to strike the note to which our own nervous system responds. We are like so many musical glasses. We ring when we are in unison with the exciting object, but not otherwise, and an actor with a bad voice will labour for hours at a part, and most intelligently too, without being able once to touch the chord that causes our tears to flow. The *cri du cœur*, as the French call it, is never without its effect. But the odd thing is that it need not come from the heart at all; it need only be perfectly simulated and the trick is done. The lever is pulled and the fountains play. Spurgeon hated the theatre and all its works. But his wondrous powers were akin to those of the despised actor. A preacher like Spurgeon speaks out of the fulness of his heart, whereas the actor only tells off his lines. True! But the physical mechanism which acts upon the emotions of a multitude is the same in both cases. The bad actor may feel within himself as acutely as his most brilliant rival, just as the poor preacher may have as much true piety in his bosom as a Spurgeon. But without the faculty of conveying what he feels, of radiating sympathy around him—and this is a physical gift not to be acquired in schools or colleges—the one is of as little account on the stage as the other is in the pulpit.

‘The most remarkable example of oratorical effect that I can recall,’ said a veteran journalist to me one day, ‘was a great speech of Bright’s on the slavery question. He spoke in majestic tones of the workers in the good

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cause, and especially of "noble women—not a few," who had helped to knock the manacles off the slave. Amid an impressive hush he mentioned some of these by name. We were all deeply moved. When the names were published in the papers next day they looked utterly trivial and commonplace—Mary Ann Turner, Eliza Jenkins, Sarah M'Collops, and so on. They were women one had never heard of, but so grand was the orator's manner that they seemed as he spoke to belong to some illustrious roll of martyrs or to be the heroines of a great poem.'

We are all of us apt to make too little allowance, not only for the 'point of view' of our neighbours, whatever it may be, but also for the spectacles through which they may look at a given subject. 'So many men, so many minds,' is one of the truest of proverbial sayings. It needs, no doubt, a considerable amount of toleration and breadth of mind to realise that the man who differs totally from one in opinion is not a fool. Many people, I am afraid, never allow their reasoning to carry them so far. But after all, one can only think and feel in accordance with the mechanism of brain and nerve with which one happens to be endowed, and the sort of experience which one has accumulated. No two human beings, I believe, are mentally constituted alike any more than they are physically, but just as you may say that there is an average height and weight for men, so you may accept certain propositions as falling within the general experience of the community, and commending themselves, therefore, to the majority of minds. Propositions of this kind may be summed up under the name of common sense. At the same time, the views and sentiments upon which the majority of people are agreed form only a small

Conflicting Opinions

part of the whole range of human intelligence. And so, side by side with the fundamental laws of society, all sorts of odd and even conflicting opinions are held, and what is more, honestly held.

The most important conclusion forced upon us by the dynamic theory of mental action above set forth is that our boasted free-will has no existence. Free-will is an ecclesiastical doctrine, which the psycho-physiologist rejects, although it continues to be tacitly accepted by society at large. In truth, it is difficult to grasp the idea that we are not free agents, but only sensitive mechanisms acted upon by circumstances. I say to a friend, for instance, that free-will is impossible, and he immediately retorts: 'My dear sir, when I leave this house it is open to me to turn either to the right or to the left. I decide which direction to take. I might take either turning, but I choose the left. That, surely, is an exercise of free-will.'

No doubt such a proceeding looks like free-will. But what happens is this: the word free-will at once calls up in the man's mind a series of memories which are each a sort of mental impulse. They are conflicting; they drive him different ways. At last one impulse prevails over the others, and, as the result, the man takes a certain turning. As he does so, it seems to him that he is exercising a choice; as a matter of fact, he deceives himself—he has no more choice than the weathercock, which is swung hither and thither by the wind.

The best exemplification of the working of the human mind, in the circumstances imagined, is given by a wonderful machine which may be inspected in the Bank of England. It is a delicate balance for weighing sovereigns, and it works automatically, its special function being to

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throw the good coins into one receptacle and the light ones into another. The sovereigns are fed into a long sloping metal groove, down which they slide, like men walking in Indian file. At the lower end of the groove they come upon the balance, which quivers for a moment under their weight. If a given coin is decidedly of full weight it tilts it at once to the right; if decidedly light, it is thrown with equal promptitude to the left. The beautiful working of the machine is best shown when it comes upon a doubtful sovereign. It pauses. You can almost see it thinking. 'Shall I, or shall I not, give it the benefit of the doubt?' it seems to say. It quivers with indecision for a moment, and then throws the coin into its appropriate receptacle, right or left, as the case may be. A wonderful machine, truly! So very like a human being in its action. If it were possessed of consciousness, it would imagine each time it judged a sovereign that it was exercising its free-will. In point of fact, its action, intelligent as it looks, is merely a mechanical response to a mechanical stimulus.

Our brains are just such a mechanism, only infinitely more complex and more sensitive. Stimuli from the outer world act upon them through the organs of sense; recollections of past experience surge up; there is a struggle for mastery between the different emotions or impulses excited. In the end, one set of feelings or another outweighs the rest, and we imagine that our minds are made up, that we have taken a decision. We then plume ourselves upon our exercise of free-will. In point of fact, the whole mental process is as much conditioned by circumstances as the action of the sovereign-balance in the Bank of England. It is that wonderful

Free-Will

thing consciousness which tells us what we are doing, and induces us to believe that our action is voluntary. Consciousness need, however, have nothing to do with the process. A man walking in his sleep has no consciousness, the part of his brain which produces that being inert ; yet he can do wonderful things involving judgment and, apparently, volition or will.

As our brains are not all built alike, our actions in a given set of circumstances are necessarily not alike either. This is why one man is good and another bad. We weigh his actions in turn, as the machine weighs the sovereigns, and in that process, again, the judgment of one man differs from that of another. It would be possible to construct half a dozen sensitive balances which would act as variously as half a dozen men, the stimuli in each case being the same.

Negatively, the same conclusions can be arrived at. If we have free-will why don't we all will to do the best for ourselves? Why are we not all Shakespeares or Rudyard Kiplings? Because we cannot, you will say. Well, then, how is it that we cannot? Does not our inability to do what Shakespeare and Rudyard Kipling have done imply a limitation to the exercise of our supposed free-will? This is so obvious a conclusion that it has only to be expressed in order to carry conviction with it. Another argument remains. Insanity or weak-mindedness is due to a derangement of the mental machine or to some imperfection in its structure. We recognise that as being a bar to sensible action—that is, the action of the average healthy brain. But if free-will is something outside of our brain-mechanism, why should it not exist in the lunatic and the idiot and impel them to act

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like normal mortals? No; our boasted free-will is not a thing that bears analysis. It is merely the name that we apply to the action that circumstances cause our brain-mechanism to perform. In hypnotism, as in sleep-walking, consciousness is suspended, and with it our so-called free-will. But that does not prevent the patient from acting exactly like a man with a will of his own. If you order him to go from one room to another, he will exercise judgment as to the route he takes and as to the avoidance of obstacles. Free-will! A figment of the imagination only!

As for consciousness, it is not sensation, but an occasional accompaniment of sensation. When a mental effort is being made, consciousness attends it, but if by repetition the thing becomes easy, we go on doing it unconsciously. Most of our bodily functions are carried on independently of consciousness, and those include the storing up of all sorts of sensations and perceptions. Comparing the mind to a stage, consciousness, as Taine remarks, is a patch of lime-light thrown upon it here and there. Everything that comes within the radiance we are aware of. All the rest of the mental field is in darkness; yet a great deal may be going on there of which we know nothing. Probably only the highest of the lower animals have any glimmering of consciousness. The great majority of them may be without it, as all life in the vegetable kingdom appears to be.

CHAPTER II

Long and Short Life—Susceptibility to Disease—The Criminal Warp—Characteristics of the Murderer—Jabez Spencer Balfour—Education and Criminality—Punishment—Moral Bent—‘The Coster Marquis’—Lord Randolph Churchill—Drunkenness—The Weismann Theory—Teetotalism—Suicide—The Determination of Character.

How absolutely our lives are shaped by circumstances not under our control will be seen if we glance at the main conditions of existence—at our experience of long and short life, of health and disease, of criminality, of moral bent, of drunkenness, of suicide. The physical differences obtaining between man and man are too patent to be ignored. Moral differences are still generally ascribed to the operations of the will on the part of the individual, though the evidence that these are equally beyond our control is startling in its force when it comes to be examined. As to the means of attaining long life, for instance, which most people desire! There is no means except to be born with the requisite constitution. No rule of life leads to centenarianism. Of the centenarian whose death is chronicled in the newspapers, one reads that he either smoked all his life or did not smoke, that he worked hard in the fields or preferred the less exposed life of the town, that he was adventurous or stay-at-home, a teetotaller or a drinker, a meat-eater or a vegetarian. Like the poetic brain, the capacity for long life is an

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inherited condition. It is one of the most stable of the characteristics transmitted from father to child; so much so that whenever there is a case of extreme old age one may confidently look for the same characteristic cropping up in other members of the family. Age is not to be measured by years; one may be as old at forty as another at eighty. In short, long life is a natural endowment, the source of which lies in the mysterious laboratory where Nature blends the ancestral qualities that go to make up the individual man.

While medical science has succeeded in prolonging the average of human life by alleviating or warding off disease, it is powerless to extend our years to, say, two hundred or five hundred. Nor with the organism constituted as it is would this be a desirable consummation. What pleasure does life hold that one has not tasted by the age of, say, sixty-five? Every living creature's faculties are nicely graduated to the normal span of its existence; so that the gnat which dies in a day knows all there is to know of gnat life. How wearisome would be a human life of one thousand or even five hundred years? Are there any loves, or any friendships, or any interests whatever that would last it out?

It is only germ-disease that we have any prospect of reducing, and although that tends greatly to shorten the average length of life, it has no effect at all in hastening the processes of senility—the gradual decay of bodily and mental powers. Death from old age is due to the wearing out of the nervous system and of the physical mechanism which it controls; and science has never been able to touch the causes of that. The late Dr. Brown-Séquard thought to do something for the regenerating of the

Length of Life

nervous system by a hypodermic injection of his invention, but his death effectually disproved his theory.

That extreme old age should appear worth striving after is one of Nature's illusions. In every living thing there is implanted the instinct of self-preservation. Supposing mankind were suddenly to lose it! One may doubt whether, in a hundred years, there would be a single surviving member of the human family. But the gratification of every instinct is a pleasure, and there is a certain pleasure, no doubt, in living as long as one can. Of all instincts, indeed, that concerned with self-preservation is probably the most enduring. After all the luxury of life is gone, that remains; for there is no instance on record of a centenarian calling his acquaintances together—he has usually outlived his family—and saying: 'I feel it now time for me to go. I do not propose to live any longer.' No; he continues the struggle until he falls by the way. Often, looking at some wretched human waif, one is tempted to ask, 'What has he to live for?' He is obeying that prime instinct to which I refer—that is all. He is obeying it blindly, and if you like, irrationally. And at what a cost (the bystander reflects) is he maintaining the struggle. '*Sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* everything,' he would be better dead.

The biologists tell us that in general the length of life of every species is determined by its necessities as regards the launching of its young upon the world. Thus, if man's life were limited to twenty years, like a horse's, while children remained as helpless as they are, it is clear that few of these would be in a position to earn their livelihood, or to continue the propagation of their kind, before they were swept away. The foal, however, is in

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a condition to provide for itself long before the baby. By seventy or seventy-five a man has seen established in life not only his children, but his grandchildren, and by the strict and pitiless law of nature it is clear that his function is ended.

Even within the normal span life is very largely made up of futile repetitions; the weary round of eating and sleeping goes on from decade to decade without a break. Let the man of middle age consider how much he would lose, in the way of experience, if five, or even ten, years were sliced out of his life. The period would mean so little, that is, it would be so largely compounded of repetition that practically he would not miss it at all. It would be as if he had never lived it. After the age of thirty or five-and-thirty—I am taking the period if anything a little too late—the most surprising experience in life is the rapidity of the flight of time. Five years, ten years are as nothing looking back upon them; they seem to have passed as a flash. With the very old, this experience presents itself in a still more striking form. The last twenty or twenty-five years of their lives leave little or no impression upon their minds. If they cultivate the pleasures of memory, it is the pleasures of long ago, the pleasures of their youth and of their prime that they recall. What matters it, then, whether one dies at seventy odd or a hundred?

Most people would say that cleanliness was likely to conduce to longevity, but there is on record the case of a Mrs. Lawson, who died in the early part of the century at the reputed age of one hundred and six, and who never washed herself, but merely rubbed her face at intervals with lard, believing that people addicted to soap and

The Mystery of Epidemics

water were apt to catch cold. Not only moderation in eating and drinking, but tranquillity of mind and the ability to sleep well are excellent aids to longevity. But they are far more inherent in our constitutions, for which we are not responsible, than dependent upon that illusory attribute the will. Clearly, unless the mental faculties could in some way be re-invigorated—and no microbe-killer professes to have that result—the mere prolongation of life would be a questionable boon.

The mystery of epidemics and of disease generally lies in physical conditions which are still obscure. A slight change, perhaps, in the atmosphere—a change unperceived by our rude senses—gives some particular microbe its fling, just as there are favourable years for flies, wasps, field-mice, or locusts. Thus small-pox, typhus, and all the other scourges of the race have their times and seasons, quite independently of the existence in a given place of the specific germ. Of most diseases the germ is always with us, awaiting its opportunity. A healthy man takes no harm from walking from the Mansion House to the Marble Arch. On that journey, however, he probably meets with the germ of every disease known to the Registrar-General. If he is susceptible, if there is a weak point in his armour, the pedestrian will be liable to contract one or other of those diseases. Otherwise, he is what the bacteriologists call immune. For, admitting that a wasting or inflammatory disease is always the work of an active and malignant bacillus, we have still to get at the *causa causans*—the liability of certain persons to receive the germ while others escape it. In every epidemic, for example, there is a certain percentage of the population who enjoy immunity, and yet who receive the same contamination

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that carries death to their neighbours. Why are some taken and others left? When science can tell us this the whole microbic theory will be on a sounder footing than it is to-day. With regard to consumption, for instance, which condition can truthfully be said to be the disease—that in which the tubercle bacillus is already at work, or that which offers it a congenial lodgment in the first instance? The great medical secret that wants unlocking is ‘predisposition,’ and this probably applies to all germ diseases.

At present I am bound to say I find the principle of heredity very commonly misunderstood. In the literature of consumption some medical man will constantly be found remarking with reference to a case that no hereditary influence is present, his reason being that neither of the patient’s parents was consumptive, though they may have suffered from other forms of nervous disorder. ‘Like father, like son,’ is still the prevalent notion of heredity in the common walks of the medical profession, as it is among the general public. Now this primitive view has been entirely disproved by the researches of the past ten years. What is transmitted from parent to child is not a disease; nor on the beneficial side is it a gift, an art, or an accomplishment. It is simply a condition of the nervous system which works out ill or well for its possessor.

Nearly allied to this question of disease is criminality, a condition equally inevitable in certain cases and at the best as hard to cope with. Crime is essentially a manifestation of bad judgment. The criminal plays for a wholly insufficient stake, and appears incapable of estimating the chances against him at their proper value. Apart

Criminality

from moral considerations, could any one assert with a full appreciation of the risks involved—risks such as a well-balanced and fairly well-informed mind would take account of—that it was ‘good business’ to rob a till, to forge a cheque, to strangle a farmed-out baby, or to break into a suburban villa and murder its occupant for the sake of such small booty as there was to be had? No; on the lowest ground it is not good business, and no normally constituted person would attempt it. There must be a warp in the mental mechanism before the first suggestion of the crime is entertained.

If I were asked what quality would best safeguard one from committing murder, I would unhesitatingly answer—sensibility of character, *i.e.* a quick perception of, and a ready sympathy with, the sufferings or wrongs of others. To be able to strangle or drown a little child for the sake of a paltry pecuniary gain implies a rare obtuseness of feeling. To the murdering burglar also, callousness, extreme callousness, is a far more necessary article of equipment than a jemmy or a loaded revolver. If you are going to think how unfair it is to the victim to have his brains battered out for attempting to defend his property, you had better renounce that line of business.

The murderer’s nerve is shown no less in the dock and on the gallows than in the commission of his misdeed, and it is not unlikely that to the last he feels less than the normal observer gives him credit for. Given a certain moral blindness, an inability to perceive or weigh distant probabilities, a lack of sympathy and a desire for some object lying within reach, and you have the born criminal’s character. *Je l’ai assez vu, il peut crever* is the sentiment with which he regards every human being who does not

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minister to his convenience. Otherwise it would be incredible with what slightness of motive the most atrocious of crimes may be committed.

A surprising feature of the police statistics is the very small variation in the number of offences committed over stated periods. Year after year murder, theft, robbery, burglary, housebreaking, etc., go on in the same proportion, and, what is no less strange, are followed by the same percentage of convictions. So that if he were of a mathematical turn of mind, the potential offender, before embarking upon a career of crime, might sit down and calculate his chances in each particular sphere of action to a nicety. Calculation, however, is just what the born criminal never indulges in. He follows his line of least resistance, or rather the line along which his more active passions and faculties drive him.

That, indeed, we all do, the austerity and high moral purpose which compose a great Lord Shaftesbury being as much a natural endowment as the moral obliquity which goes to the making of a Charles Peace. By nothing is the terribly fateful character of crime more clearly shown than this—that not only do its various classes maintain their proportion year after year, but they follow the growth of the population. Among every 100,000 persons added to the inhabitants of London there is a fixed proportion of criminals of all kinds, each class occupying its prescribed place in the list. The grand total of crimes committed in London year by year is as steady as that of the stock-diseases reported by the Register-General, and the inference is irresistible that it has its root in the same set of natural causes. Having under the stress of Darwinism revised its notions of creation,

The Murderer's Characteristics

the world it would seem is now brought face to face in the moral field with the equally momentous doctrine of the fatality of sin. This, to be sure, is no new doctrine, but it is new to think of our spiritual teachers battling as vainly with warped moral natures as their medical brethren do with curved spines and rickety limbs.

In murderers of the first rank—those who take life in cold blood and with an utterly inadequate motive—one finds several well-marked characteristics. They are all morally obtuse, blind to the enormity of their crime, which to them is nothing more than the knocking over of ninepins ; a large proportion are cunning and resourceful ; and others are dominated by an excessive vanity, with or without cleverness behind it. Out of such materials you might manufacture almost any kind of habitual criminal you liked ; and, be it remarked, these are all inborn qualities, owing nothing to education or surroundings. How is a man who is morally obtuse, cunning, and vain, to walk in the strait path and observe all the rules of civilised society ? Add a little sensuality or avarice to his composition, and you have not a man, but an active agent of wickedness. I do not deny the force of vicious surroundings. Upon an ill-balanced nature they may exercise an unfortunate effect. Probably many persons happily circumstanced are law-abiding who under temptation would be criminal. Murders, too, may be committed by individuals whose moral weakness consists merely in a violent temper or an hysterical impulsiveness. What I insist upon is that the criminal bent may be so strong as to assert itself under all circumstances, and nobody, I venture to think, who examines this question with an open mind

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will be able to subscribe to the current doctrines of free-will and moral responsibility.

Have you ever tried to place yourself at the criminal's point of view—to feel as he feels, to see with his eyes? It is a curious exercise, but no more difficult than the effort of the novelist or the dramatist to project himself into the characters of a story. The recorded confessions of criminals help the experiment greatly. One of the most interesting of these, because one of the most naïve, is that of Marie Schneider, a girl of twelve, who murdered a playmate in Berlin and was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. This damsel came behind a little boy in the street, held his eyes, and asked him who she was. 'I pressed my thumbs deep in his eyes,' explained the minx to her judge afterwards, 'so that he cried out, and had inflamed eyes. I knew that I hurt him, and in spite of his crying I did not let go until I was made to. It did not give me special pleasure, but I have not felt sorry.' The playmate whom Marie Schneider murdered was a little girl barely able to walk. The child had earrings, and Marie thought that by taking these and selling them she would be able to buy herself some sweets. Sent on an errand by her mother, Marie fell in with her victim on a public staircase. She wanted to have the earrings, but was afraid that if the theft were discovered she would be beaten. The second-floor window on the stair being open, it occurred to her that she might kill little Grete (the child), and silence her for ever by throwing her down from that height.

The confession proceeds: 'I went with her to the window, opened it wide, and set her on the ledge, with her feet hanging out and her face away from me. I placed

Jabez Spencer Balfour's Character

her so because I could push her the more easily. Then I heard some one coming down. I quickly put the child on the ground, and shut the window. The person having gone by without noticing us, I placed her on the window-ledge as before, and pulled her earrings out. Grete began to cry because I hurt her. But I threatened her, and she became quiet. I put the earrings in my pocket. Then I gave her a shove, and heard her strike first the lamp, and then the pavement; after which I ran downstairs, and went on the errand my mother had sent me. I knew I should kill the child,' explained Marie. 'I did not reflect that her parents would be sorry. It did not hurt me; I was not sorry; I am not sorry now.' On seeing the dead body of her victim afterwards, she still experienced no emotion. 'They put me with four women,' added this precocious murderess, 'and I told them the story. I laughed while I was telling it because they asked me such curious questions.'

Here we have an excellent example of the callousness of the criminal mind to suffering in others. Much the same kind of indifference may be seen in little boys who stick forks into the eyes of cats, skin rabbits alive, and inflict other tortures upon animals. But Marie Schneider's confession is especially valuable, because her crime was not only heartless in itself, but had such a motive as criminals constantly obey.

One of the most remarkable criminals of the present generation was Jabez Spencer Balfour, the perpetrator of financial frauds which brought him a sentence of fourteen years' penal servitude. Balfour was in many respects a very good citizen. He never got into trouble with the policeman on the beat. He paid his rent and taxes. He

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could always be reckoned upon to sit upon a jury or a committee ; to give a cheque to a deserving cause ; to take the chair at a philanthropic meeting ; and to make a rousing speech, properly seasoned with morality. He was a prominent figure in the Nonconformist world ; he was zealous in the promotion of religion and piety. I do not suppose, however, that the warp in Balfour's nature was essentially different from that of malefactors who profess no religion at all. It must have consisted in an inherent lack of the precious quality of sympathy, the greatest sweetener of life, and perhaps the noblest, as it is undoubtedly the most distinctive, quality of human nature. There must also have been associated with this moral deficiency a love of power and of patronage which rendered the possession of ample means, no matter how acquired, a necessity to him. He was assuredly no miser, Balfour. He was an open-handed giver, and his hospitality was unbounded. Among other good deeds, he presented his favourite place of worship with a peal of bells, and it may be noted that he was not only zealous in all religious observances himself, but that, on the platform, he criticised with righteous indignation the easy-going lives of the clergy of the Established Church. Without his other failings to divert it to wrong uses, this congenial familiarity with religious things might even have served as an instrument of good, as it probably does in the case of other more or less distinguished persons to whom the garment of piety is easy-fitting.

Here then, I take it, are the chief constituents of Balfour's character, the determining factors in his career—extreme callousness, an indifference amounting to blindness as regards the sufferings of his victims, and a love of

The Blind Eye

wealth for wealth's sake, on the purely social side. Of course these characteristics are not in themselves enough to constitute a Jabez Spencer Balfour. The first, lack of sympathy, makes the potential criminal, inspiring to murder, robbery, or mere brutality, as the case may be. Callousness is the distinguishing mark of the criminal in all his varieties. Balfour's second characteristic gave his criminality its special bent, in the direction of monetary fraud, and fraud on the largest possible scale. So equipped, he might still have been comparatively powerless. For the exploitation of his criminality he required to have, in addition, the opportunity and the means. The opportunity is furnished by circumstances; the executive ability is a special gift, which would be entitled to rank as an element in the criminality but for the fact that, with a good motive behind it, it might have been employed to the best ends.

A boy named Coombes, who murdered his mother at Plaistow a few years ago, was a curious example of criminal unsoundness. He was only thirteen years of age, but for at least a week he meditated killing his mother for the sake of the few pounds she was known to possess. He talked over the matter with a younger brother, who became Queen's evidence, and told him that he had seen in a shop window a knife that 'would do it.' This knife he bought for sixpence, after a business-like haggle about the price, and the following night he got up out of his bed, and stabbed his mother to the heart as she slept. Even so, the strangest part of the case is to come; for the two boys lived in the house with the corpse until it polluted the neighbourhood, the elder meanwhile resorting to ingenious devices to borrow money, and obtaining the

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assistance of an adult acquaintance, who looked after the house in his absence and kept inquisitive neighbours at bay. Here we have combined remarkable precocity and astuteness with a child-like simplicity. For the same degree of calculation that enabled the boy to plot and carry out the murder, and to attempt to raise money on loan—in one instance by means of an advertisement to be inserted in an evening paper—ought to have convinced the juvenile culprit that, with all the luck in the world, his game could not last many weeks. His father was coming home from sea, the woman's continued absence would necessarily provoke inquiry, as indeed it did; there was the awful stench of the remains advertising the crime to every passer-by. Then, as to money, the slightest exercise of common-sense ought to have shown this youthful matricide that the few pounds stolen from his mother's pocket or borrowed from friends of the family would last but a few weeks at the most, and that he and his brother, schoolboys as they were, without any means of livelihood, would be destitute. No! With all the cunning displayed in it, this Plaistow murder was not a rational act, even as boys of thirteen understand reason. This particular boy, the elder Coombes, must have a whole range of perceptive and moral faculties blunted. He can have had no feeling for his mother, and he must have failed to realise the plainest consequences of his crime. Boys of his age are often curiously destitute of feeling, being wantonly cruel to cats or other animals that have no particular rights, and that have the misfortune to fall into their clutches. Out of this state of callousness, happily, the majority of them grow in time; but some, of course, do not, and even turn their insensibility to account in the furtherance of their interests

Calvinism and Science

in the world, as did Napoleon (probably the most remarkable member of the class) when he manured the fields of Europe with the bodies of men from sheer love of conquest.

Few people will deny that conscious calculation is by no means the sole rule of life. There is a sort of ingrained principle, an instinct of good as well as evil in our natures, which we obey without knowing exactly why. The psychic influences of which we are the sport fight it out among themselves in the subconscious stratum of our minds, and we only become aware of the result when the battle is over. That there is conscious calculation too, I allow. But whether the calculation be conscious or unconscious, it means this, that criminality, just, let us say, like philanthropy, is the outcome of such physical, mental, and moral influences as are combined in a given individual, who, for the most part, knows as little about their operation as the most casual looker-on. Alone among the Christian theologies, Calvinism, with all its narrowness, recognises the great central truth of biology. It has its doctrine of the 'elect,' and of predestination. All the other theological systems seem to sink too much the doctrine of chance in the lives of men, and to be lured away from the true path by that will-o'-the-wisp, free-will.

The truth which theology has shown a disposition to rob us of in this respect science restores to us, and I do not know that the scheme of creation is any the less mysterious, inscrutable, or impressive on that account. The merit of the predestination theory is that, as far as our poor eyes can peer into the mystery of things, it accords better with human experience than the hypothesis of free-will, which, if you examine it for a moment, will be found unworkable,

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since we can only will with such mental mechanism as is given to us.

A difficulty many people feel in the way of accepting the hypothesis that ingenious murders are committed by lunatics is that they give evidence of so much reason and cleverness on the part of the perpetrators. But the homicidal mania sometimes displays a degree of cunning amounting to genius; and cunning and audacity, both, make a formidable combination. Nothing is more difficult than to realise the condition of mind of the homicidal maniac in one of his insane fits. He is aware that he is doing wrong, because he takes such precautions to ensure concealment. Yet he kills ruthlessly, without a single pang of conscience, and often mutilates his victim, as it would seem from pure devilry. What thoughts or ideas pass through his darkened mind it is impossible to tell.

Although such patients have their lucid moments, no one has ever been able to give any account of his homicidal fit. He appears to possess two personalities, two memories, which remain distinct—a condition of mind which is also found dissociated from the homicidal tendency. Very mysterious and inexplicable are the workings of the brain. We are still very far from being able to understand the genesis of the simplest sensation, to say nothing of so complex a thing as an idea. The psychologists are groping their way towards fixed conclusions. Enough, however, is known of the obscure descriptions of insanity to enable us to say with confidence that murders of a brutal, fiendish, motiveless character are extremely likely to be the handiwork of some unsuspected lunatic living the greater part of his time perhaps in the odour of inoffensiveness and respectability.

What to do with the Criminal

Recently an eminently respectable writer in the *Standard*, having looked into the facts of criminality, was constrained to admit that crime was the outcome of a mental warp or deficiency, but he added, with unfeigned alarm at the prospect thus opened up, 'Society cannot, in self-defence, afford to recognise the truth.' What a monstrous doctrine! I do not know that I have ever seen anything so utterly immoral in print. Not recognise the truth! And why not, pray, if it is the truth? Why not admit that two and two make four, even though society in the dark ages should have constructed and handed down to us a multiplication table in which that principle is not admitted. As a matter of fact, society is not called upon to sacrifice itself to the new theory in the slightest degree. All it has to do is to change its conception of criminality, as under stress of facts it has had slowly, but inevitably, within the last two hundred years to change its conception of the solar system. As regards its theory of morals, society is still in the Ptolemaic stage of development, and is much troubled with Galileos, who are calling attention to its error. Some of these, I dare say, it would burn if it dared. But truth in the end will prevail, though the transition from one set of ideas to the other may be very gradual, and then—the world will go on very much as before.

Society has many dangers to guard against besides the criminal, and it happens to take a right view of most of them. When a building is found to be in a shaky condition it is pulled down; nobody takes the trouble merely to pray for its reformation. Nobody looks upon a noxious stench as a mere aberration of matter which a course of maxims, pronounced by a gentleman in a black coat, will correct; the sanitary inspector, who is a man of action, is

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✓ called in. Well, theoretically the proper way to deal with the criminal is to put him out of the way of doing harm to his fellows—either by killing him or by shutting him up. Why should we set the habitual criminal free at the end of a few months or a few years after a given offence, when we know that the first use he will make of his liberty will be to commit some fresh outrage upon society? The prison records teem with examples of our folly in this respect. Admittedly habitual criminals are seventy or eighty per cent. of the whole. To talk of reforming the habitual criminal is to fly in the face of facts. He is not to be argued or scourged out of his criminality. As well try to induce a quadruped by argument to walk habitually on its hind-legs.

The Chinese are still in the deterrent stage of penal legislation. They complicate the death-penalty with torture of the most exquisite kind. Murderers are hung up by the neck in an iron cage with their toes just touching the floor. They have the option of straining their toes to relieve their necks, or straining their necks to relieve their toes. Meanwhile all food and drink is denied them, and finally they strangle themselves in their frenzy. Alternatively there is the process of flaying alive by the method of the 'thousand cuts,' and a horrible fate it is, though possibly more so to the imaginative bystander than to the victim himself, to whom Nature kindly administers her beneficent anæsthetic, unconsciousness.

Short of death, crime is punished by a great variety of tortures, some of them positively devilish in their ingenuity, such as wrenching off the victim's toe and fingernails with pinchers, or making him kneel with bare knees on iron chains, and placing heavy weights upon the back

The Mode of Execution

of his legs. Could the deterrent principle be pushed further? Hardly, one would think. Yet crime goes on in China to exactly the same extent as in our own favoured land, the fact being that the criminal looks solely not to his punishment, but to his chances of escape. He knows perfectly well what awaits him if he is caught. But he thinks he is clever enough to escape. The gain is immediate, the punishment remote.

Our theories of insanity do not work satisfactorily—that is a fact. Admitted ‘cranks,’ like Deeming or Neil Cream, are hanged; others are provided for by the country during Her Majesty’s pleasure. We have no guiding principle in such matters. Much depends upon the expert evidence, the idiosyncrasy of the judge, the mood of the jury, the character of the prisoner’s insanity, which may be either obvious or obscure. It would be an excellent rule that the person who intentionally kills a fellow-creature should *ipso facto* forfeit his own life, whether technically insane or not. ✓

As to the mode of execution, that too needs reform. Under a non-vindictive, non-curative system, all that is required is that the convict should be suppressed. Why not accomplish this painlessly in a lethal chamber? Hanging is a relic of barbarism, a survival of the time when the death-punishment was intended to be a public exhibition. Now that executions are private, the gallows is a clumsy and needlessly revolting instrument of death. It would be perfectly easy so to arrange matters that the convict should pass away unconsciously in his sleep. ✓

Given the criminal bent, education appears to do little or nothing to nullify it. In the born criminal’s hands it is only a weapon the more. Balfour was an example of

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this truth, and the criminal annals are rich in similar cases. Both Kerr and Benson, the notorious forgers and swindlers who defrauded the Bank of England of large sums, were outwardly gentlemen of education and refinement. Without their education they would not have been half so dangerous to society. A notorious forger, Dr. Scott Sanders, distinguished himself at Cambridge, entered the medical profession, and at thirty years of age was moving in the best society, with the brightest social and professional prospects. Yet he must needs engage in forgeries to the tune of some £200,000. What education does in such a case is merely to extend the scope of the criminal's operations. Without his educational and social advantages, Scott Sanders would probably have been obliged to operate on a humbler scale. Education is to the mind what athletics are to the body, neither less nor more; it may sharpen an existing faculty, but it cannot create a new one. Nobody supposes—because the supposition could be too readily disproved—that athletics could make all men of the same height, weight, or vigour. Yet something of this sort is expected of education within its sphere. Many well-meaning people (although the world is no longer young) go on believing that the inculcation of copy-book maxims will suffice to make a man virtuous and persevering.

It is surely time the futility of this doctrine were recognised. And as much may be said about punishment as a deterrent. Formerly, when all men were supposed to be able to exercise the same degree of judgment in the management of their affairs, punishments of the most drastic character were devised. We were then where the Chinese are now.

Early Impressions

Criminals were not only condemned to death; they were drawn and quartered, dipped in boiled oil, seared with hot irons, racked, thumb-screwed and mutilated, sometimes for the slightest offence. Still crime went on in the same ratio as before. Legislation got as far as decreeing that a person who stole property to the value of five shillings should be tortured and put to a shameful death.

All in vain! We can no longer shut our eyes to the fact that criminality is as innate as the poetic faculty, or the financial faculty, or any other faculty, and that the genius whose ill-fortune it is to be at war with society instead of being its petted child, necessarily follows the bent of his disposition as other geniuses do. Not all criminals, of course, are possessed of the genius of their calling. The criminal section of society is very like other sections. It contains its master-minds, its average practitioners, and its bunglers, the last-named of whom fortunately are in the great majority.

That impressions are very copiously stored up in the 'subconscious mind,' not only during childhood, but in manhood as well, is certain. Every now and again flashes of my early training, so to speak, come into my mind—that is to say, within the sphere of consciousness—showing an established early bent, which, however, constantly yields to my maturer judgment—flashes of Calvinism and Sabbatarianism, for example—and unquestionably good or bad habits may be unconsciously formed, from example or otherwise. But it is easy to push the theory of subconscious training too far. Is it not matter of notoriety that children of the same family, brought up under practically the same influences, home and educational,

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turn out very differently, one boy being studious, another full of physical energy with a contempt for books? And is there not the black sheep of the family as well as the genius, both brought up under the same conditions? Many great men have cultivated their natural aptitude under the most adverse influences in childhood. I need only name one, Handel, no member of whose family knew a note of music or cared for it. Not only so, but Handel's musical bent in childhood was sternly repressed by his parents; yet, by dint of furtive practising on instruments that he found in other people's possession he overcame all the obstacles in his path, and by the age of eight or nine was a composer. What does all this go to prove? Surely that a stronger bent than that given by subconscious education is impressed upon the mind in the first instance by heredity, by which I mean that the cerebral mechanism is apt or otherwise for certain pursuits by dint of its original structure, with which neither the individual himself nor his schoolmaster has anything to do. To say, as Dr. Johnson did, that a man may train himself to excellence in any direction whatever, that he may at will become a great musician, a great mathematician, or a great poet, is sheer nonsense. The whole experience of the world is against it.

Of evil predisposition, short of actual criminality, a more striking example could not be cited than that of George John Brudenell-Bruce, Marquis of Ailesbury, familiarly known as the 'coster marquis,' who drank himself into a dishonoured grave a few years ago, at the age of thirty-one, after a scandalous career of debauchery. It is commonly said that surroundings make character. What are the surroundings of an English marquis? They must

The Coster Marquis

be pretty much the same for one marquis as for another. Nevertheless, one turn of the wheel gives us a Marquis of Salisbury and another the Marquis of Ailesbury. Again it is said, *Noblesse oblige*. But what cared this titled rowdy for the traditions of his caste? Observe that his blood was of the proper azure tint. The late marquis was no upstart peer. Nor was he the offspring of a lordly *mésalliance*. He was the fourth Marquis of Ailesbury, and his mother was a daughter of the second Earl of Craven. Excellent stud-book credentials, in fact, if only the stud-book of the English peerage meant anything but an array of names, like jam-pot labels, useful as indicating the original mixture, but proving nothing as to the vessel's present contents. Before tradition or surroundings can affect a person, his mind must be of a nature to receive their influence, which is tantamount to saying that he would remain pretty much the same man if they were changed.

Does any one suppose that there was a point in the 'coster' marquis's career at which he paused and said, 'Now I can be anything I please. Shall I go into the House of Lords and be a second Lord Salisbury; or shall I take to Exeter Hall and be bracketed with the late Lord Shaftesbury as a philanthropist, living in each case to a ripe old age, and covering myself with glory and renown; or, finally, shall I associate with blacklegs and riff-raff, acquire the manners of a stable-boy, and the vocabulary of a bargee, get warned off the turf, kick my coronet into the mire, squander my patrimony with money-lenders, become a byword, drink myself into *delirium tremens*, and close my career at thirty, the age at which most men are beginning to live?'—is it conceivable, I say, that such a

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process of reasoning was ever indulged in by this late profligate peer and social pariah, and that he deliberately chose the downward path? I do not see how any one can think so. And yet, if our accredited moralists are to be believed, all the late marquis's infamy and disgrace was, like Georges Dandin's misfortune, *voulu*. In reality it was predisposition as ruthless and inevitable as that which dooms a man to the lunatic asylum. For men are the sport of their own automatic forces of nerve and brain, will being, as I have shown, nothing but the predominant impulse in what may be a wholly vicious organisation.

Obviously it is difficult to draw the line anywhere and say, Here sanity ends and insanity begins. Popularly, insanity is applied to those forms of mental derangement which render the patient dangerous to his fellows or in a direct sense to himself; short of that he may be eccentric, flighty, a discredit to his family, what you will. It is only when he lapses into criminal courses that society deigns actively to interest itself in his case. The errors of the late Marquis of Ailesbury were hurtful only to himself, and society could afford to look on them pityingly. But if it had occurred to him, instead of using volleys of bad language, to fire off a pistol in the street, society would have restrained him in its own interests.

When Lord Randolph Churchill, to take another notable example of the last few years, closed under painful circumstances a political career of great promise, surprise was expressed in the newspapers that he should not have made better use of his opportunities—that he should not have emulated a great political leader like Gladstone. Could anything, at bottom, be more grotesque or more flagrantly impossible than this theory of life? Does any

Model Statesmen

one imagine that Gladstone, on entering Parliament, *chose* to live to be eighty-nine, and to be all that he was in the interim? Does any one suppose that Lord Randolph *chose* his career, with its meteor-like brilliancy, and its painful extinction, at little more than half Gladstone's age. Finally, does any one suppose that, by dint of this moralising in the newspapers, some young politician, now preparing his maiden speech, will be enabled to avoid treading in Lord Randolph's footsteps, and to follow in those of some great model? If not, to what end all the moralising in question? Did Lord Beaconsfield's secret of success die with him, or was it rescued and preserved in the newspaper biographies, but persistently ignored by all the budding statesmen of the time, who might, all of them, did they only follow the moralist's advice, become Beaconsfields too? With all the great models of the past before them, and the moralist to give them advice, is there any reason why our modern politicians should be anything but Chathams, Pitts, Foxes, Burkes, Peels, or Palmerstons, according to choice? I have no patience with this foolish theorising. Surely a man does not what he ought, but what he can, or what he must! And that being so, such moralising as we get in the newspapers whenever a notable man dies is as barren as the east wind.

The teetotal advocate speaks and writes as if the craving for drink in the first instance were created by the sight or presence of a public-house. Yet he has only to ask himself how it is that he passes the public-house, not only with indifference, but with loathing; and it will be borne in upon him that his contention is somehow faulty. The truth is that nobody becomes a drunkard from choice or accident. Before a man takes to drink as a vice he has

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a taste for it, a predisposition which grows out of some physical defect, constitutional in the first instance, but liable to be aggravated by poor food, unwholesome surroundings, bodily wear and tear, and loss of moral tone. It is the characteristic of alcohol to be delusively stimulating, and wherever there is strain and stress, physical or moral, there you may look for the possibility of drinking, though even so the vice in its worst form can only develop in conjunction with an already vitiated nervous system. There is an inborn aptitude for drinking as there is for writing verses or painting pictures.

Medical men detect the drunken bent long before its victim realises his own condition. It is particularly noticeable in women of the upper classes. They suffer from nerves, sinkings, despondencies, aches, and other indefinite disorders, which drive them usually to narcotics of some kind before they find solace in alcohol. Drink is with them only the last resort. They mostly try morphia to begin with, or some other of the numerous preparations of opium. Among the lower classes, before the drunkard of either sex has had occasion to think of narcotics, he or she has found solace in the public-house. And the need for stimulants which drives some to the bottle sends others to the teapot; so that there is intemperance in tea as in alcohol.

✓ Those who believe that a soundly constituted man can force himself to become a drunkard, and then transmit a vitiated organisation to his children, undertake the heavy onus of disproving the Weismann theory of heredity. Professor Weismann denies that 'acquired characteristics' are transmitted from parent to child, maintaining that the reproductive cells of the organism are passed on intact

Drunkenness

from generation to generation, affected only by the blend which takes place at conception, but otherwise secure against all the assaults of fortune; and his scientific opponents—that is to say, those whose habits of thought are disturbed by the new hypothesis—would give a good deal to be able to upset his contention. This they would do, if they could show that a person acquired the drunken tendency and transmitted it. In fact, Weismannism would then fall to pieces as surely as if it were proved that a man whose leg had been cut off would have one-legged children.

I am at a loss to imagine how heredity can be accepted without the Weismann limitations. If every parent who had an eye or a tooth knocked out were going to have children similarly blemished, the race would soon sink into decrepitude. Only the offspring of young and comparatively uninjured couples would have any chance of being born reasonably sound in wind and limb; while in the moral sphere we should have to suppose that strong Tory or Progressive opinions acquired by a parent would make themselves felt through several generations. The drunkard is what he is because he is cursed with a nervous system which calls for stimulant and will not be denied, and it is this abnormal and inherited organisation which, transmitted in a greater or less degree to his children, is apt to land them in nerve-troubles of some sort, not necessarily identical with his own—insanity among the number. Conversely, teetotalism is largely determined by the physical organisation. To take credit for being possessed of the teetotal temperament is like boasting that one is six feet high, dark, fair, stout, lean, or otherwise, as nature prescribes. Teetotalism, like drunkenness itself, is an *effect* of existing conditions.

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Suicide is one of the most reprobated of acts ; but there is ground for supposing that it has a basis of insanity even when apparently most rational and deliberate. Some little time ago an inquest was held on one William Wainwright, a brush-manufacturer in a large way of business in the East End. He was a member of the Whitechapel Board of Works, a churchwarden, and a past-master of a masonic lodge—a successful and much respected citizen ; and he blew out his brains in a railway carriage. There was nothing in his life to indicate insanity. But he was a brother of a Wainwright hanged for murder in 1875. Who knows what little rift there may not have been somewhere within the lute, all unsuspected by his closest friends ? That there must always be a considerable proportion of insane suicides is certain. This is shown by the fact that the critical periods of life—adolescence, pregnancy, child-bearing, nursing, and the climacteric—all increase the suicidal as they do the insane tendency.

Probably a very large proportion of suicides act under impulse, the cause of which is less due to a decay of the love of life than to some temporary loss of control. Most of us know in some degree by experience what it is to have an insane impulse. Who can stand on a very high tower without feeling impelled to try a leap into space ? or fail to sympathise with the man who cannot look at a large plate-glass window without thinking how pleasant it would be to hurl a stone through it ? or who feels, on passing a haystack, that he must set it on fire ? The check imposed upon our actions by reason is one of the most indispensable of the higher mental functions. Among persons reckoned sane it exists in varying degrees of efficiency. It may be regarded as the material basis of

Suicide

morality, the criminal being one whose conduct is mainly impulsive, and who has not that perception of consequences which is required to make his motives reasonable. Lack of control is the distinguishing feature of most forms of insanity, and, curiously enough, the morbid impulse may exist side by side with a tolerably active sense of right and wrong, so that a man may be impelled to suicide while perfectly realising the folly of the act.

The most various accounts of their conduct are given by persons who have been prevented from taking their lives. Some appear to have no recollection of how they felt or what prompted them, and are surprised when they learn what they have done. According to others, the idea of suicide suddenly possesses them in the midst of work, or even enjoyment, and without apparent cause. They feel that they must take their lives, and they do it, or try to do it. Finally, as showing how strangely controlled is the human mechanism, there remains to be mentioned the fact that the rate of suicide in this country is highest in the summer months and lowest in winter. The explanation would appear to be that fine weather has a stimulating effect upon the organism, and that with the exaltation of the faculties in general there is necessarily a quickening of those of a suicidal nature, generally latent.

CHAPTER III

Sleep and Dreaming—Memory—Automatic Action of the Brain—Remarkable Experiences—Dreams realised—Premonitions—Telepathy—Hallucinations—Ghost-clothes—Spiritualism—A Dream-criticism—Spirit-control—The Fascination of the Occult.

THE physical basis of mind is well illustrated by our experience of dreams, ghosts, and other so-called supernatural phenomena. The study of mind is the study of brain, and the study of brain is the study of a complex mechanism in many compartments—compartments for sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, the regulation of every muscular movement of our bodies, and the analysing and sorting out of all the impressions derived from the outer world: the whole, an amazing network of nerve-cells, and of countless fibres conveying the mysterious energy there generated. In the weaving of the fabric of thought all parts of this mechanism must be employed, and what keeps the infinite multitude of nerve-cells in activity is the circulation of blood through the brain. Sleep means simply the withdrawal of the blood-supply from the various sensory, motor, and intellectual centres. If that withdrawal is pretty complete, the sleep is as profound as death; if it is only partial, certain portions of the brain remain active, and we see, hear, feel, or even reason dimly.

The great basis of thought is memory. Without the faculty of memory we might live and breathe, and receive

Dreams

fleeting impressions from the outer world, and still be as destitute of thought as a plant or a jelly-fish, because we should be unable to compare any present impression with any past one. What, then, is memory? We can only suppose it to be a faint revival in a certain group of nerve-cells of the thrill caused by the original impression, and this thrill is not confined to its proper area, but communicates itself through the network of fibres, which are so many telegraph wires, to all other cerebral centres concerned.

In order to find an illustration for my argument, I pick up a newspaper, and my eye falls upon the word 'revolver.' Instantly the impression of these letters, received in the visual centre of the brain, is coupled up with memories of sight, sound, and touch, which bring before me not only the image of the weapon, but all that I have heard and read about revolvers. In fact, the association of ideas is wide enough to embrace reason and morality, which are, I believe, merely elaborations of our experience in the inner chambers of the brain.

Armed with these facts, let us now consider the question of dreams. If sleep is not heavy, if there is a partial circulation, say, through the visual centre, the largest sensory area of all in the human subject, situated at the back of the head, memories of past scenes will be revived, or the nerve-cells becoming spontaneously active, like galvanic batteries freshly charged, will form fantastic images of a novel kind out of the *débris* of past impressions. Nay more, the galvanic thrill may be communicated to other regions of the brain—the motor centres, for instance, whence we should derive ideas of movement and locality.

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We may thus see with tolerable clearness, and even exercise a vague and ghostly kind of reasoning, in dream-land. But there will usually be some area of the brain dead, and consequently some faculty absent. This would explain what often perplexes the dreamer, namely, that he has no sense of morality in his dreams; that he is ready to commit any crime, and think nothing of it. Also that dead persons appear to him in dreams as living, and that he sees them without any sense of surprise. As a rule, in dreams, the higher operations of the intellect are dead, so that we see the most impossible things without the smallest disposition to criticise them. The lunatic lives in a condition of mind free from the restraints of reason, and if we would realise his experience, we need only recall how we have felt in dreams.

This theory of mind, I venture to think, disposes of much of the evidence that the Psychical Research Society have collected in support of apparitions, whether of the dead or the living, as objective realities, of the survival of the Ego, and other pseudo-scientific doctrines, presupposing the detachment of consciousness or intelligence from the body. There is nothing that can happen to us objectively that may not appear equally real in a subjective or purely fanciful form. In fact, the whole difference between reality and imagination is, that in the former the mechanism of the brain is 'operated,' as the Americans say, from the outside, whereas in the latter its action is internal and spontaneous.

Many people going to bed at night with the fixed intention of waking at a certain hour are able to wake almost to the minute. What is it that wakes them? I have no doubt that, in some region of the brain, we

The Sand-glass Theory

unconsciously take note of the waste of tissue going on in our bodies, and judge of the lapse of time by that. The indication is never quite accurate, never so accurate as that of a clock or a watch, but it comes wonderfully near the truth. To this sand-glass theory of our perception of the lapse of time some support is lent by the fact that, while we have a pretty definite conception of the passing of hours (between meals), we are generally hazy as to the progress of years. In fact, the reckoning of years is a totally different process. We require for that, not the gauging of our physical feelings, but a mechanical manipulation of dates. In accordance with the sand-glass or waste of tissue theory, the lower animals may have a conception of time on a small scale, but it is much to be doubted whether the most intelligent of them could form any idea of such a period as a year or even a week. Their notion of time is probably as vague as that which we have in dreams.

The theory above indicated clears up many curious cases that have exerted the wonderment of the Psychical Research Society. Professor Royce, of Harvard University, had a dream, in which he saw an enormous flaming clock-dial, with the hands standing at 2.20. Awaking immediately, he struck a match, and, upon looking at his watch, found that the time was a few seconds past 2.20. The vision of a clock-face indicating the right time has even occurred to men awake, forming a visual hallucination. A gentleman states that once, as he was walking past Tattersall's, and when he had no idea of the exact time, there suddenly appeared before him the face of a clock of immense size. Every figure was perfectly visible, the huge black hands pointing to 11.25. Something told

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him that that was the right time, and so it proved to be.

Hypnotised people told to perform a certain action at a certain hour of the day or night do so when awake, and often after the lapse of considerable time—the Nancy operators say as much as a twelvemonth. That many of the stories of hypnotism require confirming I make no doubt, but this I have seen with my own eyes. A young man is hypnotised, and told that in half an hour he is to go and change the position of an object on the mantelpiece. He is then restored to consciousness, and recalls nothing of what has been said to him. In half an hour exactly, in the midst of a general conversation, he suddenly jumps up, walks over to the mantelpiece, and does just what he had been told. When asked why he does this, he says it suddenly occurred to him that the position of the object ought to be changed. In this case there was no clock in the room, nor did anybody look at a watch; yet the patient was able to measure the efflux of time exactly and unconsciously. The internal hour-glass again!

Here the problem of consciousness arises. Why we are conscious of certain mental acts, and not of others, which also involve labour (such as the solving of some difficult question in facts or figures which we take to bed with us in a tangle, and wake to find all beautifully cleared up), it is hard to say. If we think of the mind as a capacious stage, shrouded in darkness, consciousness may be compared to a small circle of white light thrown in the centre of it. All the mental operations that come within this focus we are conscious of. The others escape us. Yet they go on all the same. Generally, it may be said that the frequent repetition of an act tends to withdraw it

The Problem of Consciousness

from the range of this bull's-eye of consciousness. We then do it, as the saying is, mechanically or instinctively, although it may involve some extraordinarily complex processes. All the great natural functions—breathing, swallowing, digesting, walking—are unconsciously performed; and it is probable that the lives of the great mass of the lower animals are lived in the same state of mental obscurity.

At the same time, I am not prepared to admit that consciousness has anything to do with the question of the soul, or the 'higher self,' with which the theologians are concerned. It is clearly the function of some part of the material brain, because in sleep, or as the result of a blow on the head, it ceases to act, just as any other faculty ceases, and I do not envy those who are committed to the task of proving its detachability from the body. Moreover, it is as certain as anything can be, that dogs and other animals possess a 'consciousness,' similar in kind, though probably much less in extent than ours. In addition to being an interesting function whereby the brain can look in upon and criticise its own operations, consciousness is intimately concerned, I believe, with morals. I do not see what hold the moral law could obtain upon society without the existence of consciousness.

In the periods of physical torpor that occur when one is in a fever, the mind becomes extraordinarily active, but in a shallow, flighty way, and with a curious predilection for the grotesque. With your eyes half-closed strange shapes manifest themselves in strange quarters. Bits of wall-paper which one has never taken any notice of become alive with the oddest figures, which, transferred to canvas, would make an eccentric young artist's reputation; mantel-

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piece ornaments get themselves tilted into an eccentric position, as if they had been posed by a Cruikshank, and laugh at you with a soulless air.

When you close your eyes in this mood a new and different world opens—not all grotesque—a very puzzling world. The scenes are of the utmost variety, but it is not possible to obtain control over them. They develop in their own way, and they come and go like the figures in a cinematograph. So at least it has been in my experience. I remember during an attack of influenza, with my temperature at 103, a dimly-lit apartment opened out to me, with a dull grey light revealing two or three drabby people of the Dutch type of two or three hundred years ago. One of them stepped forward, and addressing me, said, *à propos de bottes*, ‘Times have greatly changed since Tel-el-Kebir, that was—how many years ago?’ There was a pause; nobody seemed to be able to crack this historical nut. ‘Send for the Encyclopædia,’ I said aloud, thinking to carry on this strange scene a little further. But no! there was no further movement, and, in spite of my attempt to hold them, the figures faded away.

This was the only instance in which voices intermingled in the scene, but in another spectacle of a modern dinner-party—brightness, many-hued costumes, diamonds, flowers—there was a confused murmur of revelry. Usually the scenes were silent. I could not make the figures do anything. Like the ghosts of the children in *Macbeth*, they would not be commanded; but I could always wipe them off the slate by opening my eyes, and then I could never recall them. At times came a furious whirl of cinematograph pictures, mostly ‘Arries and ‘Arriets,

Dream Figures

followed by old bits of castle wall, which I believe I had never seen in my life.

What are these things? Are they scraps of the raw material of thought lying latent in our brains until circumstances shall bring them forth into our sphere of consciousness? If I were going to write an old historical romance, for instance, would these old bits of castle wall present themselves to be embedded in the narrative? I believe such abnormal mind-pictures illustrate the automatic action of the nerve-cells of the brain, and explain the 'creations' of the man of genius, with whom they are normal, in the sense that they require no febrile stimulus to produce them.

I cannot conclude these experiences of the febrile condition without recording a curious and graphic episode of the acting-in-dumb-show order. Suddenly, as I was thinking of nothing, with my eyes closed, yet not asleep, in full daylight I beheld two splotchy neutral-tinted figures thrown into my mental field. I made them out to be a male and female tramp of the worst variety, the woman with a bleached leather face, the man frowsy, dirty. It seemed to me that they believed me to be asleep. Any way, they began to take a lively interest in me of some kind. The woman peered into my face and then exchanged looks with the man. Between them there promptly grew up some kind of understanding as to robbing my pockets. The woman cautiously set to work, and I regarded her proceedings without alarm, because somehow I *knew* that all this was perfectly unreal. I had frequently noticed that the most solidly built up sets of my reverie condition proved but the baseless fabric of a vision as soon as I opened my eyes upon them. But

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I was curious to see how this little episode would develop. Conscious that I could not influence the tramps in their operations with regard to my person, I was anxious that they should have a free hand. Unfortunately, matters did not go much further, for the nurse came into the room, and my tramp friends fled like ghosts at cock-crow. Here, it is instructive to note how the Ego looks on at these manifestations as a sort of amused observer. That I take to be an indispensable condition in the working of genius. If the Ego is overpowered or carried away in the prevailing agitation of the brain, the result is delirium or insanity.

To return to dreams! If more attention were paid to the working of our minds, I believe there would be much less margin left than at present exists for the seemingly supernatural. I am very far from discrediting all the stories I have heard of dreams coming true, and of waking premonitions being fulfilled for which, at the time, there appeared to be no material foundation. While in Switzerland overlooking the Lake of Lugano from a romantic spot on the Monte Generoso, I was shown a little ledge of rock on which a lady a few days before had accidentally dropped a valuable diamond ring. It seemed as if the ring must be lying somewhere within the space of a few square feet where grass was growing, but it had been searched for in vain, and a reward of five hundred francs had been offered for its recovery, without effect. I happened to mention this afterwards to a fellow-traveller in the train, and he told me that he had lost a ring under very similar conditions, but had recovered it by means of a dream. He was ~~along~~ with a party of ladies and gentlemen when, fumbling with his ring, he dropped it, and it

Unconscious Memory

rolled towards the foot of a tree a yard or two off, where, however, it could not be found, although a diligent search was made. There seemed to be no possibility of the ring being lost, and after half an hour's hunting for it, he came to the somewhat uncharitable conclusion that one of his friends must have picked it up and pocketed it unobserved. This opinion, however, he kept to himself. A morning or two afterwards a lady who had been of the party stated at breakfast that she had had a vivid dream in which she distinctly saw the ring lying under a fallen leaf near the foot of the tree. They all returned to the spot, and there sure enough was the ring lying in the exact position indicated, and wet with dew showing that it had been there for some time.

Whether the ring had been stolen by the lady and put back there, under some qualm of conscience, I do not know, but at least one other explanation is possible—this, namely, that she had really seen where the ring fell, but had taken no conscious note of it at the time, the impression remaining, however, in her mind, and being brought within the sphere of consciousness by the automatic action of the brain in sleep. If this seems rather a far-fetched explanation, we must remember that many similar instances have been recorded of the perceptions of people being acuter in sleep than when they are awake. Some of the apparent mysteries of clairvoyance are to be explained in this way. There have been instances of people dreaming that they would die on a certain date, and dying accordingly. Here there has very likely been some disease or physical weakness present in the heart or some other vital organ, of which, in his waking moments, the sufferer was not conscious, but the effect of

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which was accurately estimated by the automatic action of the brain. It happens sometimes that a person is warned in his sleep not to embark in a certain enterprise, and that events prove the warning to have been well-founded. Is there anything supernatural in this? To my thinking, not at all. The person has simply been able to form a sounder judgment in his sleep than when he was awake, just as a mathematician, who has racked his brain in vain over some difficult problem, finds it all solved for him in a dream.

Having requested to be furnished with examples of dreams and supernatural warnings, I have received from a number of correspondents experiences possessing a psychological interest. Here is one respecting the result of a race.

‘About a fortnight before the Liverpool Cup was run for the year 1892, I dreamt I was leaving my house after dinner to return to business, when a boy selling the evening paper at once hailed me, shouting, “Liverpool Cup, result!” In my dream I purchased a paper, opened it and saw most clearly and plainly, in the usual bold type, Windgall, Ermak, and Lady Rosebery. This is the order in which, a fortnight after, the horses came in. The strangest part of the dream was that I did not know Ermak was in the race. I told most of my acquaintances what I had dreamt. Most of them backed the horses as I had dreamt them. I myself did, not heavily, as I am not much of a betting man; moreover, I do not believe in dreams. Now for the sequel: On the actual day of the race, as I was leaving my house after dinner to return to business about the same time as occurred to me in my dream, the same boy I saw in the dream was in the street selling papers, and shouting, “Liverpool Cup, result!” I purchased a paper, opened it, and to my utter astonishment my dream was verified.’

The main facts of this case seem an additional proof of the already well-established thesis that the mind exercises

Dreams Verified

its judgment when asleep, and occasionally better than when awake. Very often the judgments of the sleeping mind are not borne out by the event, and then we hear nothing of the dream. The writer introduces what seems at first a supernatural element into the case when he says that he saw the same boy in the street as he had dreamt of a fortnight before. Here, perhaps, comes in a little of the unconscious embellishment I speak of. Was it, in truth, the same boy or *a* boy? Of course he may be quite right. He may have been in the habit of seeing a certain boy selling papers in the street, and, in that case, would naturally associate him with the dream. Although not actively interested in racing, my correspondent had more or less unconsciously taken note of what was going on in the sporting world.

I have said that the judgments of the mind formed in sleep may be erroneous. A curious example is sent me by a correspondent in the following terms:—

‘My cousin, a surgeon, and a thoroughly sceptical and practical man, told me that one night, being unable to sleep, he got up and threw open his window. It was a bright moonlight night. On stooping forward to lean on the sill, he was horrified to see stretched out, as though dead, the body of one of his patients whom he believed to be suffering from an incurable complaint. He attempted to place his hand on the seeming corpse, but found only the cold stone. So impressed was he by this vision that he said to himself, “This is a sign; when I call on him” (the patient) “to-morrow he will be dead.” The first thing he did the following morning was to call on this patient, who to his astonishment was better than he had been for many months.’

Not only did the patient survive, it appears, but he lived many years after, and died from a totally different disease. So far all is plain sailing. The doctor believed

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that his patient was doomed, and saw him dead accordingly. Had the patient really been suffering from an incurable disease, and had he succumbed, as the doctor expected, the dream would have been more impressive, though it would have been just as explicable on scientific grounds. The real difficulty of the case, however, has still to be stated. On the doctor's visit to the patient after his dream, the latter was highly gratified at his improved condition, and said, 'But, doctor, I had a peculiar dream last night. I dreamt I was lying dead on your window-sill.' My correspondent, it will be observed, merely relates the story as it was told to him at first-hand, and it may be that the original teller indulged in a little of the embellishment I speak of. But, even in its present form, the story does not stand alone. There are many recorded examples of the same idea or the same image presenting itself to two minds simultaneously at a distance, and to explain these the Psychological Research Society has invented the word telepathy, or thought-transference.

To a much commoner order of phenomena belongs the following case:—

'When a child (nine or ten) I was at Cheltenham School. Several lads besides my brother and self were in the habit of visiting an old farmhouse at Swindon, about three miles from C. On one occasion we were prevented from returning to school by a thunderstorm. As I showed a tendency to somnolence, I was put in a bed upstairs and left. I woke up some time in the night with a vague impression that some one had spoken to me. Looking around, I perceived a tall figure in the room, who advanced towards me and, placing a hand on my shoulder (I feel it now), said "My child!" This was several times repeated. Panic-stricken, I rushed from the room and was met by domestics and others aroused by my screams. They calmed me as best they could. Years after, I heard that a former tenant had murdered

A Warning

his wife, and that the room was haunted by the woman, constantly demanding her child, which had been taken from her a few weeks previous to the crime. You will, of course, say' (adds the writer) 'that I had heard this tale, but had taken no conscious note of it at the time, the impression remaining in my mind to be brought within the sphere of consciousness, and so on.'

Well, this is just what I do say, and I am sure that my explanation covers the above and all cases of the same kind. I have a good one which comes under this category. The writer conducts an extensive business correspondence with Australia and New Zealand. He dismisses from his mind the purport of each letter as soon as it is written, but regularly he has a premonition of the reply made to it by letter or telegram many weeks afterwards.

'It has very frequently happened' (he writes) 'that just on the date the mail arrives, or even a cablegram, and before the delivery of the letter or cablegram, I have dreamt of having a reply to such and such a letter, and when getting to my office in the morning it had been a surprise to find the reply I dreamt of. Now, this' (he adds) 'confirms your view that at the time of writing I took a record in my mind, and this lay dormant until circumstances revived it. I am of a reasoning disposition, and not given to believe in the supernatural, and I don't like mentioning these things lest people should think I do so to support theories of the supernatural order. But I believe brains are peculiarly constructed for this to be brought about. I have for years—in fact, as long as I can remember—relied with perfect safety on waking, and I have done so usually to the minute I resolve.'

Here is a dream or a vision conveying a 'warning.' It is communicated to me by a lady, who tells me that she had been suffering great family trouble (this being, presumably, the inciting cause of her dream):—

'When things had come to the worst, I—who seldom dream (never having indigestion, the common cause of such)—used to have one dream, a dream of horror, a dream of lost souls, not in

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hell, in its common acceptation of the word, but a hell which would appeal peculiarly to me. I was always in this place, seeking rest and finding none; surrounded by other souls, whose whole hideous life seemed written in their doomed faces. Nobody spoke, and every time I asked "What is this place?" a look would come on the face of the being asked, such as a dog would have whose master, well loved, has died—a hopeless unexplained lost look. No sound ever; and as for the place itself, my words would never convey its awfulness. Now for the tragedy of my dream—my hand shakes as I tell it.

'My life grew too hideous to bear, and—having my own views as to the legality, or otherwise, of closing "one's own book"—I determined to bid good-bye to this old world. For days I walked about with a bottle of Hunter's Solution of Chloral; and one night, Sunday—my evil day always—I walked my room in the darkness, and, as I passed my dressing-table, I caught, in the glass, a glimpse of a white despairing face, and two big, sad eyes. It was the face of one of *my lost souls*! The beings I saw in my dream!

'And then, only, I realised that a warning had been given me—God only knows from where (this is what all your science will never make clear)—and the method of the warning was initiated long before the guilty purpose itself entered my mind. Do you see this? I knew now that if I did this thing, the peace and rest, even annihilation, I craved, would not be mine—but another life—death, rather, in the abode of my dream.

'This is all. I laid the glass down, and walked out into the cool night, miles and miles, and at last lay down with my head on mother earth and listened to the big silence—just the chirp of a bird now and then—and tried to draw together the threads of my so tangled life. I could look for earthly comfort nowhere; and although I felt convinced this warning had come from God, I had been at war so long with the idea of a God who could bear to see one of His creatures so desperate and unhappy that I could *not* draw comfort from that source. And though I walked home in the lovely bright sunlight saved, I had still the old trouble to face.

'And my dream never came again! To me this is the surest proof that it came not "unsought, unsent," a question of nerves and daylight impressions.'

So far from being a hard nut for psychology to crack,

The Genesis of the White Face

this vivid 'experience' fits in very accurately with prevailing theory, which assumes a large amount of mental work to be done outside the sphere of consciousness. It seems also to show that while consciousness may be something in our life, it is not everything. That, indeed, in a scientific sense, is the most important feature of my correspondent's 'experience.' I do not remember, in all the literature of the subject, anything which so unmistakably points to the possible detachment from consciousness of the sense of right and wrong. Usually in dreams, trances, or visions, there is a curious suspension of all sense of morality; but here a moral impulse, operating in the subconscious strata of the mind, is strong enough to revive a visual effect—that of the white face, seen in the mirror and accepted by the mind—by some sort of prearrangement with itself, as a warning.

As to the genesis of the white face, or rather faces, of the dream, it is clearly due to some automatic action of the brain, stimulated in the first instance by my correspondent's unhappy domestic circumstances. Such spontaneous activity of the nerve-cells of the grey matter we are bound to accept as a fact. It is the one conceivable source of the hallucinations of the insane (who see, hear, touch, taste, and smell things that are not); of the more coherent mental images of the man of genius; and, in a general way, of all the creative mental acts of our daily life. I have no doubt that my correspondent, in her unhappiness, was brooding over ideas of perdition, and that she unconsciously turned to the dreary, desolate hell of northern mythology rather than to the fire-and-brimstone pit of the peoples of the South whose ideas have come to be incorporated with Christianity.

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This aspect of the question—the spontaneous action of the brain—is aptly illustrated by another correspondent—a well-known Socialist—who sends me the following:—

‘It happened, some months since, that I, late one evening, was skimming over some book, written in ridicule of Socialism, in which was a paragraph giving the writer’s notion of what a Socialistic street would be like. He depicted rows of mean-looking houses, all of precisely the same pattern, to the most minute detail. Now, my idea of a street under a non-competitive system being of a totally different kind (elegance, refinement, and as much variety and ornamentation of both persons and habitations as would be compatible therewith, being cultivated to the utmost possible extent), I was extremely disgusted with this fellow’s view of the matter; so, when in bed that night, I thought I would endeavour mentally to produce a Socialistic street, and see which of our views it favoured.

‘For a long time I could see nothing but a sort of mist or smoke; but presently from this emerged some hundreds, perhaps thousands, of figures having a sort of banjo-like appearance—circles with a projecting arm—the meaning of which, for a long time, I could not comprehend. At last the smoke cleared off to a great extent, and I then discovered that these singular figures were the heads of groups of rough, excited men, and that the straight lines were guns, which they carried over their shoulders and in various positions, while a deal of smoke (? that of gunpowder) still remained above their heads. This scene, like all those of my other “visions,” was constantly on the move, different groups forming every instant, and the positions of the men and the manner of holding their weapons changing also. But all was so distinct for the moment that I could see and count the buttons on their clothes. But to the last they remained rough, excited, angry men, holding guns and surrounded by smoke.

‘This “vision” seemed almost prophetic to me, I having been in search of a totally different scene; while it is feared by a vast number of people (many not at all Socialistic) that a change of system, whatever it may be, will be preceded by a violent revolution, in which rough and excited men, and guns, will play a very prominent part.

‘After viewing this unexpected scene for some time, I wiped it

Visions

off my brain (if the expression may be allowed), and made another effort to produce the much-desired street. This, after a time, I accomplished ; and what did I see ? A row of some fifteen or twenty houses (not even semi-detached—observe this), each house being superbly ornamented, and in a style of its own, both of architecture and of ornamentation, but all in perfect keeping and harmony ; the corner house being ornamented with masonic signs (none of which, except the triangle, do I know anything about), in gold and primary colours ! “Ah !” you will say, “you concocted all this in your mind.” I can prove to you it was not so ; for I have, for many years (I can show you a tale, *à la* “Looking Backward,” written twenty years ago, wherein I pictured such habitations), in describing what a Socialistic street would be like, represented every house surrounded by a large bit of garden ground ; whereas those of my “vision” were all built quite close together, with merely an ordinary pavement in front ! Then the style of ornamentation is the very last I should consciously have thought of or should suggest. Besides, I abominate freemasonry. Yet I am bound to say that there was nothing unsightly or offensive in the corner house of my “vision.”

‘I do not pretend to understand how all this comes about, you say. But my belief is that, having all my life taken a deep interest in scenery of every description, and, while no judge of the talent exhibited in them, having always found great delight in pictures, vast numbers of these views and pictures have been stored away in the cells of my brain for many years, and are liberated and pass before my mind’s eye, as a picture-slide is placed between the light and the lens of a magic-lantern, when, in darkness and silence (not always necessary), I reflect on certain subjects. Nor do I think this habit or ability is peculiar to myself. I have no doubt that a great number of other people have similar experiences ; but, unlike myself, keep them to themselves.’

That the stored-up impressions of the past are capable of being revived, more or less in their entirety, is very true. Their revival constitutes memory, and memory is, undoubtedly, the chief fabric of thought. Without memory and a faculty of comparison, which enables us

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to judge between past and present experience, every scene would be new to us, and when our eyes were closed our minds would be a blank. It is hard to conceive what sort of world it would be were memory denied us, as it probably is to vast numbers of existing species. But, as both the foregoing visions go to prove, the spontaneous action of the nerve-cells of the brain has to be reckoned with; and it is necessary, further, to dismiss the notion that consciousness plays an all-important part in our mental operations.

A beautiful illustration of the unconscious mental action which I believe to be at the bottom of all these psychological experiences reaches me from a well-known architect:—

‘A lady of my acquaintance awoke her husband in the night, exclaiming, “O Tom! I have had a strange dream. I have dreamt that the centre stone of my diamond ring” (a very valuable one) “is gone.” The husband naturally replied: “Bother the dream! Go to sleep, and forget it.” But the wife was aroused and fidgety at the idea of the loss, and would not be satisfied till she had got up, struck a light, and gone to the dressing-table, where she had placed the ring on removing it overnight. There, in truth, was the ring, with the large centre stone missing! The stone was subsequently found on the carpet near the table, but this point is, for the present purpose, immaterial. Next day the story was told to me, and others, as a marvellous dream-revelation. My comment was that there was nothing marvellous about it; that in the act of removing the ring either the eye received an impression of the ring minus the stone, or, as is perhaps more probable, the fingertips which drew off the ring felt the gap left by the out-fallen stone. In either case a message, “Stone out of ring,” went to the brain, but, either from pre-occupation of that organ, or from some cause not clear to our present knowledge, it was not consciously received by it. But it was delivered all the same (as are thousands, ay, millions of impressions of external things that enter our eyes and ears every day, but of which we take no conscious notice), and when, after a period of rest, the brain awoke to activity, the

Prognostications

shelved message was taken into cognisance, and the mental picture of the gap in the ring was consciously perceived.'

The explanation furnished by this shrewd and observant correspondent so admirably meets the case, to my thinking, that I am dispensed from adding a word of my own.

Doubtless there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy, but patient investigation is greatly enlarging our knowledge of the unseen world. What men call the supernatural is only the ultra-scientific. Whenever there is a proved connection between a dream and its fulfilment, there has been some unconscious perception of the truth by the dreamer beforehand. All cases that do not come under this category may be dismissed as coincidences. A correspondent assures me that a death within his family circle has nearly always been preceded by his dreaming that his right hand has been cut off. This experience I regard as very typical. Certain circumstances within the dreamer's knowledge, though possibly removed from the sphere of consciousness, point to a coming death, and his unconscious judgment exercises itself in sleep.

This explanation would cover the many recorded instances of there being an omen in particular families, which on being dreamt of by any member of the same presages death. The force at work is the expectation of an event, which is known to the dreamer to be coupled with a particular sign. It does not matter whether this sign is, in itself, obviously associated with death—*e.g.* a funeral; it may be something quite different.

Very widespread is the belief that to dream of a wedding presages a death. Some of my correspondents vouch for this as a fact. Supposing the experience in question to be

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a rule, which is certainly not proved, my argument still applies in this way, that the mind, deeming a death to be probable, indicates it by an accepted symbol—*i.e.* a wedding.

All allowance being made for the fulfilment of dreams by means of unconscious perception, there is still no doubt a large proportion of experiences which are inexplicable. A good example of these is sent me by an M.D., who writes :—

‘You remember the horrible railway accident at Penistone, when a train left the metals and plunged down an embankment owing to the breaking of an axle. At that time I was resident medical officer at a hospital at Durham. I dreamt that I was in a large railway station, and that, just as a train was going to start, an official sounded all the wheels with a hammer. One of the wheels when struck gave a cracked sound, and, on the man testing those on the opposite side of the train, its fellow was also found faulty. The guard informed the passengers that there was a cracked axle in the train, and that if they chose to travel by it they did so at their own risk. I chose to remain behind, and I saw in my dream the train steam off. The dream was an unusually vivid one, and I woke with a feeling that some calamity was impending. On opening my morning paper I read the news of the accident. Now, I was then, and have been ever since, a close student of all the physiological and psychological theories of sleep and dreaming. I therefore endeavoured to recollect whether any rumour of such an accident had reached me before I slept. I found that this was not possible, for no evening paper contained anything about it, and, moreover, I had been closely engaged with my patients and books all the evening, and had not gone outside the hospital gates after dinner. I think we must regard this and other similar cases as mere coincidences. Dreams have a distinct value to the physician, especially in diagnosing the cause of obscure cases of insomnia. The disturbing factor which prevents or hinders sleep will also not infrequently give a prevailing colour to the patient’s dreams sufficiently characteristic to enable one to say at once what is at the bottom of the trouble. In treating cases of insomnia or defective sleep, I always ask a patient as to the character of his dreams.’

The Dreamer known by his Dreams

To any material theory of dreams, such as I have propounded, coincidence and non-fulfilment are essential conditions. If all dreams were true—if there was never any room for error, if none ever proved abortive or useless—then, indeed, we might conclude with reason that they were revelations from the superior world. But, as everybody knows, this is not so. The dreamer's perceptions may sometimes be abnormally clear, like those of the hypnotic patient, but the material of dreams, as a glance through my voluminous correspondence plainly shows, is for the most part based upon waking experience.

The dreamer is known by his dreams. De Quincey's opium visions were the fancies of a literary Englishman who had never been in the East. The dog in his kennel has different dreams, I should say, from those of the cat on the hearthrug. It would be incredible that a savage warrior should in his dreams have an exact view of the interior of Woolwich Arsenal; yet we should have to assume the possibility of this if dreams were of supernatural origin. Instead of 'waking experience,' it would be more correct, perhaps, to say brain capacity, for something must be allowed for the automatic action of the nerve-cells of the brain which in sleep evolve combinations of their own, precisely as they do in our waking moments. Nobody, I take it, has ever seen the Devil, but there are few active minds which could not by an effort imagine some frightful fiend with blazing eyes, teeth like those of a harrow, enormous claws, and barbed tail. Now the mind which, awake, is capable of forming this conception, is capable of dreaming it without reference to actual observation. The man of genius is merely a person into whose mind come, unbidden, ideas which would never occur to

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the normal individual. If we could ascertain the nature of the force exercised by the nerve-cells of the grey matter of the brain and the spinal cord, the problem of mind would be very near its solution. Insane patients have been known to develop this force to an enormous extent. I have read of a chronic maniac who worked energetically all day, and who sat up in bed talking and shouting all night for six months together. During these six months he was never known to sleep, but might be found at any hour of the four-and-twenty pouring out vociferously a torrent of the wildest gibberish with an energy comparable to that of a steam-engine.

Whether impressions can be exercised by mind upon mind at a distance through the etheric medium is an interesting psychological problem. The evidence so far adduced in favour of telepathy is not, to my mind, conclusive, or anything like it, but there is certainly some evidence. One of my correspondents develops a theory of etheric waves. He imagines that when a person is murdered these etheric waves, produced in large numbers by the brain of the victim, are somehow absorbed by surrounding objects, and by and by reacting upon the brain of a visitor to the scene, give the latter a vision of the crime. This is ingenious; but I think psychologists had better confine themselves at present to collecting evidence bearing upon the telepathic theory. Such evidence is furnished by another correspondent of my own, who vouches for the two following cases:—

‘Sarah C., a connection of my family, and residing at the time in Highbury Place, did not on a particular Sunday appear at the breakfast-table. When sought she was found to be in bed, and in an alarming state of grief. She declared she had seen

Telepathy

Samuel W. before a looking-glass cutting his throat and his blood streaming down. She was inconsolable and remained in bed while the rest of the family proceeded to church. On their way they were passed by a horseman at full speed. They turned, and saw him stop at their door. He brought the sad news which confirmed Sarah's (so-called) dream in every particular. He had cut his throat at a tavern at Tottenham. A close intimacy existed between the Wigan family and my own. Two of them, Alfred and Horace, you may remember as actors and managers. Dr. Wigan, their uncle, in his work propounding his theory of the duality of the mind, states, after describing the structure, convolutions, and hemispheres of the brain, that the powers of the brain are created by the action between two substances, and are of the nature of *galvanism*. In another chapter he gives an account (suppressing names) of his own brother being for a long time tormented through continually seeing visions of his deceased wife; and while his brother was in Paris the younger nephew, sixty miles up the country at school, and the elder, Alfred, being in Thanet, were both similarly affected, the visions being identical, as explained between themselves and subsequently to me. Would it be unpardonable materialism to believe that the father's disturbed brain transmitted those brain-pictures to his sorrowful sons?'

Surely before such a colossal hypothesis as telepathy is entertained, all known explanations of the phenomena of mind ought to be exhausted! Yet this is very far from being the case. Indeed, there is little exceptionally difficult to explain in the current stories of thought-transference, except coincidence. Most of the evidence consists of loose statements made weeks or years after the event, and we know how prone the human mind is to recall a fancy as a fact, to make the circumstances fit in with each other, to adjust dates, to read experiences in the light of later knowledge, and so on.

No theory of mental action, I am convinced, is adequate which does not allow for a far larger measure of activity

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than is commonly accepted in the stratum of subconsciousness. Most people think that their minds or, let me say rather, their field of knowledge, is bounded by their consciousness. What they are not aware of they think they do not know. This is a delusion. There is probably nothing coming within the range of our eyes or ears, or any other of our senses, which passes unregistered in the grey matter of the brain, though very little of it remains within the sphere of consciousness. Not only so, but through the spontaneous action of the nerve-cells the subconscious idea is liable to be falsified, or adjusted to suit other impressions, precisely as if we were consciously manipulating all this intellectual material. And all these unsuspected stores of information are liable to be tapped in dreams, in trances, and even in our waking state. So far as clairvoyance has any significance, it means that the patient's accumulated knowledge in the subconscious strata of his mind is called forth. In the light of these considerations a great many telepathic mysteries melt away.

There remain to be explained the numerous experiments made with 'percipients' in the transference of taste, pain, mental images, sounds, colours, and so forth. In the same room as the percipient, or sometimes in an adjoining room, a geometrical figure is drawn or a colour chosen, and the percipient is asked to state what he or she—it is usually a 'she'—feels in connection therewith. The queries are surprisingly correct, but not more so probably than pure chance or luck would determine.

For it is curious to note in what narrow grooves, after all, our minds are apt to run. Professor Jastrow of Wisconsin recently asked fifty students to write down 100

Our Mental Grooviness

words as rapidly as they could. There were thus obtained 5000 words, and of these, such is our mental grooviness, no fewer than 3000 were the same. This fact I commend to telepathists, who are inclined to regard the correct answers of the percipients as being in excess of the theoretically probable average. Are so many of the answers right, after all? Out of 17,653 trials conducted by the Psychical Research Society, 4760 questions were successful, or approximately so. I do not say telepathy is impossible, but only that it is not reasonably proved.

Generally speaking, the recorded cases of telepathy seem to me a little too accurately adjusted, as if the experience of the persons seeing the warning apparitions had unconsciously been made to fit in with the truth, either as anticipated or as subsequently ascertained. Now, if the mind can receive impressions from afar, there ought to be some room for error, for imperfect perception, just as in the case of impressions communicated from mind to mind in the ordinary way, and that is why I regard the following letter, which I have received from a military officer at Plymouth, as one of peculiar interest:—

‘*A propos* of dreams. A few years ago I spent my short Easter leave in company with my brother in Somersetshire. On the afternoon of Easter Saturday we went for a stroll, taking a small white fox-terrier with us. Our road lay by the side of a stream, and we presently came to a plank across it. We crossed over, but the dog for some time refused to set foot on the plank: at last he came very reluctantly, and while he was crossing I turned over the plank, dipping him into the water. On my way back from leave, having a little time to spare, I visited an aunt of mine living at Clapham. In the course of conversation she said, “Do you know, I had such a terrible dream about you last Saturday. I went to sleep in my chair in the afternoon, and I dreamt that I saw you and B. (my brother), standing on a bridge

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over a river, with a small white dog, and somehow or other the dog fell in and sank, and I could see it at the bottom of the water. Then B. jumped in and sank too, and I tried to call out, and woke." The dream and the incident of the plank were, as far as I could ascertain, simultaneous. It seems to me that this is a curious case of what one might call an utterly pointless and exaggerated vision, which was nevertheless a grotesque distortion of an event actually happening a hundred miles away at the time of the dream.

'The plank was magnified into a bridge, the stream into a river, and the dog's trifling ducking into a serious accident.'

Among 'coincidences' my correspondent's experience, it will be owned, is entitled to a foremost place. Many of those that appeal to the professional occultists are probably connected with anniversaries or reported illnesses of friends, or are in some way brought about by unconscious suggestion. Others, again, clearly result from the fact that the mechanism of human minds is always very much the same, and that an idea occurring spontaneously to one mind is likely to occur to many others, though we may only hear of it from one distant correspondent. In cases where the percipient has a vision of a distant friend, and learns, days or weeks afterwards, that that friend died about the same time, there is probably some small unsuspected basis of fact for the mind to build upon. The vision of my Plymouth correspondent's aunt is not, on the face of it, to be accounted for on ordinary grounds: but then, probably, all the facts of it are not known, or not stated, though its very imperfections lend it the air of probability which is wanting in the too complete model cases of the occultists. The notion of there being a certain cerebral radiation extending from Somersetshire to Clapham (for this is the theory of the telepathists) seems inadmissible on several grounds. If there was a cerebral

External Influence in Dreams

radiation of the plank adventure, it must presumably have spread all round, and not have shot off in the direction of Clapham merely. But taking the latter hypothesis, the mental ray, so to speak, must have encountered many other brains in its course before impinging upon that of my correspondent's aunt. A ray of light or a wave of sound does not single out a solitary percipient among thousands who come within its radius, and a mental impulse, which acts differently, is not scientifically thinkable.

In the voluminous report of the Psychological Research Society on its 'Census of Hallucinations,' there is a page that seems to me to nullify all speculation with regard to external influence in the dreaming of dreams or the seeing of visions, and to prove the purely subjective nature of such phenomena. It is a table in which the reported hallucinations are classified. If there are cerebral or spiritual radiations, which produce phantasms of the living and the dead, what are we to say to the visions of animals (which are said to have no souls), and still more of tables, chairs, lights, and other inanimate objects, of which a goodly number are reported to have made their appearance? Every ghost has its clothes, which are not spiritual, and some carry candles, papers, and clanking chains.

Whatever view may be held about the disembodiment of spirits, nobody can logically believe in ghost-clothes or the other material paraphernalia of the apparitions. And if the ordinary spectre is a figment of the brain, as much may safely be said of ghostly noises and even of the mysterious 'presence' which is sometimes felt in a haunted house. There is no story of a ghostly or spiritual visitation which cannot be matched in the ordinary records of

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insanity, a mental state where hallucinations are carried to an extreme. One of the most interesting studies of incipient insanity is *Le Horla*, by Guy de Maupassant, who was probably drawing upon his own sad experiences when he wrote it. It shows how the senses may become increasingly liable to error—those senses which are accepted as our best, if not our only guides to the nature of the outer world, sight, touch, and hearing, and how this form of cerebral affection may be attended by a progressive derangement—‘weakening’ is not the word—of the reasoning and reflective faculties. That way, of course, lunacy lies. But undoubtedly hallucinations of the senses may exist without any impairment of the intellect. Not only so, but they may be stimulated in certain cases by the mere association of ideas, or a vivid expectation of something.

Then you get ghosts—and always the sort of ghost that you have been led to expect. In a haunted house where a ‘white lady’ walks, you will see a ‘white lady.’ Failing any precise indications, the visitant will be such as your mind would conjure up by association, *e.g.* in an untenanted suburban villa the ghost of a departed stockbroker, or in an old historical mansion that of a Puritan or a Cavalier.

Minds there are which, owing to excessive sensibility, are able automatically to throw into visible form almost any image or idea occupying them at a given moment. The gifted novelist sees and hears his fictitious characters as if they were living beings. Possibly a good many minds possess this sensibility under the strong stimulus created by ‘eerie’ surroundings, as in a reputedly haunted house,

Hallucinations of Sight

What perplexes most investigators is the sameness of the phenomena occurring to different generations and races of observers. But the human mind is very 'groovy.' The same old changes are rung unceasingly, and, education and civilisation notwithstanding, there is nothing more certain in connection with psychological experience than this: that what has been will be.

A distinguished novelist states that once, while alone in his chambers, he became aware of the presence of a female figure, which vanished as he looked at it. On another occasion, being in an old country inn, said to be haunted, he woke suddenly in the night, found the room perfectly light, and saw three ladies dressed in Queen Anne costume come in and sit down on chairs round the fire, after which the whole scene slowly faded away. Such experiences are intelligible enough. They are hallucinations of sight arising from an over-susceptibility of the brain, and many examples of the kind are to be found in medical treatises.

A somewhat more difficult case reaches me from a correspondent in Ireland. Coming home after many years' absence in India, F. W. found the old place considerably changed. In particular, there were new people at the vicarage, but they were said to be pleasant neighbours, and he accepted an invitation through his sister to call upon them one afternoon to take tea. I will leave my correspondent to tell the sequel in his own words. 'Walking home afterwards, I said to my sister, "You did not tell me the W.'s had a foreign servant." I noticed my sister change colour, and then she said, "What was the servant like?" "Oh, a dark man with clothes of a more flowing cut than an Englishman wears, and a dark face something like Lord Salisbury's—I should say a Swiss."

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“When did you see him?” she asked. “Just when tea was nearly over; he opened the door, looked round, and, finding that we had not finished, went out again.” By this time my sister was in a state of nervous excitement. “Do you know,” she said at last, “that you have been describing a ghost that has twice nearly frightened Mrs. W. out of her wits, and that nobody else has ever seen but you!”

Now, assuming Mrs. W.’s ‘experience’ to be an hallucination (which is easy enough), the difficulty of the story is to account for my correspondent having exactly the same hallucination in her house, and this is to be got over by the small assumption that F. W. had previously heard of the vicarage ghost, without, however, taking conscious note of the fact. Much that is apparently inexplicable in stories of the occult is due, I believe, to the unconscious action of our minds. Through our eyes and ears we take in every day a multitude of impressions of which we are not conscious. For, after all, consciousness is only a small circle of light, so to speak, in the centre of the dark stage of our mind, where all sorts of operations are carried on in obscurity. We are always unconsciously collating facts and forming judgments, and it is only the comparatively small number of mental processes falling within the circle of light that appear to us to be consciously performed. In dreaming, our stores of unconscious impressions, arguments, judgments, are drawn upon, and hallucinations of sight, hearing, or other senses are only extended dreams.

Not that all the phenomena of ghost-lore are illusory. The supernatural, etymologically speaking, is only the ‘over’ natural—something that is above or beyond the laws of nature as at present understood. A vast mass of

Hallucination

what was once the supernatural is now the natural, and this process of reduction is still going on. In whatever direction we extend our researches, science comes up to what seems to be a solid wall. It does not, however, retreat discomfited; it attacks the obstacle with sap and mine; then, like Joshua before Jericho, it blows a blast upon its trumpet and the wall falls down. So it has been to a great extent, and so doubtless it will be still further, with the subject of—I will not say ghosts, but—inexplicable sights and sounds and experiences. Three-fourths of the traditional ghost-stories do not bear analysis. Coincidence plays a large part in them, and so does the tendency of the human mind to make facts square with theory after the event. The corpse-candles seen by belated rustics over graves, and sometimes at dead of night over coffins before they are buried, are no doubt a sort of phosphorescence due to putrefaction. It is highly probable that, when a horse starts at night near a spot where a murder has been committed, he takes his cue from some suspicious movement on the part of his rider. Finally, we have to reckon with hallucination. This may be of two kinds: first, a morbid action of the brain such as we see in delirium; and secondly, the tendency of human beings to see sights and to hear sounds which are *expected*. It must never be forgotten that witchcraft in its day was supported by evidence just as strong as any brought forward in favour of apparitions. There were witches who confessed of their own free-will to being the servants of the Devil, knowing full well that the penalty was death at the stake. They belonged to the same category as those lunatics who every now and then give the police trouble by accusing themselves of imaginary crimes.

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Among the spiritualists I have had many opportunities of seeing how the delusion works. At every *séance* in my experience, public or private, a predisposition to believe on the part of the sitters was mainly responsible for what was felt, heard, or seen. True, it was only when a professional medium was present that I personally have ever experienced physical manifestations, but at private *séances*, where fraud was out of the question, persons of unquestionable honesty have declared in my presence that they saw spirit forms, heard spirit noises, and were plucked at by spirit hands. I tried once to argue a lady out of her spiritualistic notions. 'Nothing that you can say,' she answered, 'will do away with the fact that even as you are speaking I feel a spirit tapping on the sole of my shoe.' This was in broad daylight, and at the tea-table. The testimony of the best-intentioned people in the world with regard to spiritualistic matters cannot be relied upon to prove anything. What they see, hear, or feel, is mainly subjective; it is something within themselves—a result of the automatic action of their brains, like those suggested sights or sounds which hypnotised people accept as outward realities.

The detachment of mental action from consciousness is the commonest of experiences, but occasionally the results are surprising. I remember having to write for a daily journal an exhaustive notice of Mr. Beerbohm Tree's 'Hamlet.' The night before the performance I dreamt I had seen the actor in the part, and was writing my article. Not only so, but I saw the notice in proof, and knew exactly its composition. It was all written *secundum artem*, and the following night, after seeing the actual performance at the Haymarket Theatre, I was able to write my notice

A Dream-written Article

with unusual ease, because I was really in a large measure drawing upon the memory of my dream. Now, in the writing of this dream-notice I was in some sort a privileged bystander. It was being done, and I was not doing it. I watched it with interest, and felt that its wording was often felicitous and just. Perhaps the most extraordinary circumstance of the case was that at this time I had not seen Mr. Tree's 'Hamlet.' I seemed nevertheless to know exactly how it would come out, and how it did come out; and I can only conclude that my mind had unconsciously formed its judgment of the character of the new Hamlet from the actor's past achievements in other parts. Complicated as the article was, it was elaborated in chambers of the brain to which I, the Ego, had no access. Some of the phraseology was a little too bold and incisive for reproducing in the staid columns of a daily paper, but as much as I could recollect of it I used subsequently in another publication. I had something to say, for instance, about 'engine-turned Hamlets,' of which, needless to say, Mr. Tree's was not a specimen. That is a dream-phrase which I am sure I had never met with in my waking moments. It was the work of the troll within me. In spiritualistic circles this would be called a case of spirit-control, with Hazlitt or Charles Lamb perhaps as the operator.

The damning fact as to spirit-control is that the spirit is never able to tell you what you do not already consciously or unconsciously know. Mr. W. T. Stead's 'Julia,' in her recorded experiences of dying and going to heaven, merely reflects the ideas of her patron. Here is Julia's experience of dying:—'Suddenly I found myself free from my body. It was such a strange new feeling. I was

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standing close to the bedside on which my body was lying, and saw everything in the room just as before I closed my eyes.' Friends come to lament around the body, but Julia is visited by an angel, who takes her off to teach her the laws of the new life. 'Then I left the room,' continues Mr. Stead's 'control,' 'and passed out. It was so strange; the streets were full of spirits. I could see them as we passed, and they seemed to be just like ourselves. My angel had wings. They were very beautiful. She was all robed in white.' Julia afterwards sees the Saviour, who talks to her in the language of the New Testament—authorised translation—and her experience of Heaven is as follows:—'No one seems to be old. We are young with what seems to be immortal youth, though we can when we please assume the old bodies as we can assume our old clothes for the purposes of identification. . . . I find it so difficult to explain how we live, and how we spend our time. We never weary, and do not need to sleep as we did on earth; neither do we need to eat or drink. These things were necessary for the material body, here we do not need them.' Evidently Miss Julia's ideas are those of modern spiritualism tempered by Sunday-school tradition.

A lady having lost a brother to whom she was devotedly attached sends me an interesting experience. Some time before the brother's death—he died of lingering consumption—he told her that he would return from the spirit-land if he could to give her a proof of his existence there. It is remarkable, by the way, how many people seem to make this agreement with sorrowing friends in their last illness. There had never been any hallucinations in the lady's family, and it was impossible for her to

A Message from Spirit-land

guess when or in what form her deceased brother would reveal himself. Months passed without any sign of a message, and she was beginning to fear that the grave was the end of all things. Here I ought to explain that the brother had been fond of music, and that he had one or two favourite airs which she had been in the habit of playing to him on the piano. Being in a sadly despondent condition one night, she felt unable to sleep, and got out of bed to sit in her dressing-gown by the dying embers of the fire, without taking the trouble to strike a light. She heard two o'clock strike on a neighbouring steeple, and knew that the little village where these events occurred was wrapped in sleep.

Suddenly she became conscious of a presence in the room. She could see nothing, but she felt something like a breath of cold air pass across her face. The next moment the strains of her brother's favourite air sounded in her ear—it was the prison song of *Il Trovatore*—exactly as if she herself had been playing it in an adjoining room. The conviction that her brother had indeed returned to give her a sign gradually entered her mind and she went back to bed happy. Since then, however, doubts have assailed her, and she asks me whether I can offer any explanation of the phenomenon on a rationalistic basis. I can; and I am glad that I have been appealed to, because the case is rather an interesting one from the psychological point of view. It is an example of the force of 'suggestion' again, leading to an hallucination in the auditory area of the brain; or, in other words, an excitation of the sense of hearing. The mood of despondency in which the patient found herself recalled vividly the compact made with her deceased brother; she was excitable, nervous, and all the

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surroundings were favourable to a manifestation. The most curious point in the case is that it was the auditory faculty which was stirred into activity. I have heard of the sense of smell being operated upon in the same way. But usually the most responsive region of the brain is that of sight, as most people know by their dreams, which are mainly of a visual character.

It does not appear likely that the convictions of the ghost-seer will ever be shaken by scientific argument. Once you go beyond the plain, everyday experiences of life, it does not matter how much you ask people to give credence to. The 'swallow' of the average man for the marvellous is practically unlimited. The opal is said to bring ill-luck to its wearer. If he engages in some commercial speculation he will be unfortunate; his partner will go bankrupt, or the company will never float. Now consider how many unprovable—nay, wholly impossible assumptions are involved in this supposed action of the opal! Admitting that some mysterious emanation could proceed from the stone and so affect your brain that you would act in business without your usual perspicacity, how is it to be supposed that your wearing it will affect the persons with whom you stand in business relationship?

Quite as incomprehensible is the beneficial influence supposed to be exercised in one's affairs by a horseshoe nailed up over the door. It matters not to the faithful whether the article is genuine or only imitated. The influence is understood to reside rather in the form than in the substance of the object. In either of these cases, 'where is the smallest conceivable link of causation? There is none—absolutely none. Yet thousands of people, shrewd

Links of Causation

and well-informed enough in their way, believe in the ill-luck of the opal and the good-luck of the horseshoe. Where the occult is concerned there are absolutely no bounds to be set to the credulity of fairly intelligent people.

CHAPTER IV

Good and Bad Luck—Effects of Suggestion—Influence of Prayer—Gambling Theories—The Problem of Roulette—No such thing as Chance—Universality of Gambling—Life Assurance a Bet—The ‘Thirteen’ Superstition—Friday as an Unlucky Day—The Truth of Witchcraft—Miracles at Lourdes—The Holy Coat of Trèves.

THE idea of luck enters largely into our daily lives. On a railway journey, for instance, you will find a clergyman and his wife tumble into a carriage breathlessly with the remark, ‘It was lucky we caught this train.’ I dare say the worthy cleric, if approached in his professional capacity, would refuse to acknowledge that the world was not governed by design, or that even a sparrow could fall to the ground unnoted. Yet here he tacitly admits that in such a simple matter as his catching the train there is the element of luck. Is there, in point of fact? Our clerical friend may, from various known causes, have been delayed in setting out to catch the train, but, from some unknown cause, the domestic clock may have been five minutes fast, so that after all he had a larger margin of time than he suspected. That would be luck simple, or luck in the first degree. But the element of chance there contained might be subject to many modifications and refinements which could not be explained on any principle of cause and effect so far as he was concerned. At an earlier stage of its journey the train might have had to discharge or take in

Luck and Ill-Luck

an unusual quantity of luggage, and so might have fallen behind its advertised time, whereby the clergyman was enabled to catch it. That would be luck complex.

Observe! I am supposing every material fact can be accounted for—the clergyman's hurry to catch the train, the train's delay which allowed it to be caught. It is the combination of these facts in the clergyman's interest that constitutes his 'luck.' 'Ill-luck' again would be applied to the experience of a man who, making a certain journey by rail under perfectly legitimate conditions, was suddenly involved in a collision for which he was in nowise responsible. You may account for every detail of an event to your own satisfaction, and still the combination of details ranks as lucky or unlucky.

I once knew a young man who, with no brains to speak of, seemed ever to stand, as the saying is, in luck's way. On leaving college he aimed at obtaining a certain official appointment. There were five other candidates with superior claims, but from illness or accident or caprice they all somehow fell out of the contest, leaving the favourite of Fortune free to walk in. He was at that time a distant heir to a rich man—but *so* distant with two or three persons nearer of kin, and having apparently better lives than his own, intervening. Nevertheless, all these persons disappear from his path with amazing rapidity, and he obtains the coveted legacy. With no looks and no attainments in excess of the ordinary, he had before this time become engaged to a young lady possessed of both wealth and beauty, and his last reported achievement was to win a boat-race on the Upper Thames through his opponent breaking a rowlock.

Is there, then, a mysterious influence in human affairs

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which has so far escaped scientific definition? Is the existence of 'luck,' in short, a fact? I am afraid we mislead ourselves by linking together under this name facts which have no connection with each other whatever. You are walking along the street, and you ought, in natural course, to go down a turning to the right, where, just at the time when you would be passing the fatal spot, a terrific boiler-explosion occurs. Something, however, impels you, on this particular occasion, to turn to the left, and you not only escape being blown up, but you meet an old and forgotten acquaintance just returned from the Colonies with a fortune, who makes you his heir. Now, why should we link these various events together, and call the combination lucky or unlucky as the case may be? It seems to me that we have no right to do so, that the things have no more connection with each other than Monmouth and Macedon, and that, by inventing the word luck, we are really creating an insuperable difficulty for our little intellects. Why not note simply that such and such events happen, without attempting to associate them in any scheme of causation? Luck, on this showing, is not a thing apart from ourselves—it is not a good or an evil influence in our lives, but simply a name that we give to a certain order of events, the sequence of which affords no basis whatever for scientific argument.

Much of the effect of luck is popularly understood to be connected with sundry familiar actions, such as crossing the knives and spilling the salt at table, breaking a looking-glass, passing under a ladder, sitting down thirteen to dinner, and beginning any enterprise on a Friday. Now, here we have not to do with luck at all, but with scientific fact, for all these 'omens' may bode ill to those who

Prayer

believe in them, by force of 'suggestion.' How such superstitions arose is intelligible enough. Crossing the knives is obviously symbolical of a quarrel, and a fight to the death; spilling the salt in countries where salt signifies hospitality would imply treachery, or some other form of evil to a guest; breaking a looking-glass in which one's image is reflected would mean breaking or marring one's career; the ladder with a painter perched on it tells its own tale; while the supposed ill-luck of thirteen at table and Friday is clearly associated with the Last Supper. Given such beliefs, 'suggestion' works out their effect.

We are all influenced by suggestion in our waking hours, sometimes for good, sometimes for evil. As everybody knows, the state of our spirits affects our bodily health, and our spirits are affected by our beliefs. I believe most Churchmen have given up praying for the weather. There 'suggestion' would be powerless. But I should be sorry to hear that they had given up that means of influencing their daily lives for good. Prayer has been found efficacious under all dispensations. The Buddhists, who have no God, pray for the purposes of self-discipline. Reading the *Confessions of a Thug*, one notes that the most terrible band of assassins that the world has known never set about one of their murderous expeditions without praying fervently to their deity and waiting for a propitious sign from Heaven. Prayer nerved their hands in strangling their victims. How much of the effect of taking medicine may be due to suggestion it is hard to say—a considerable proportion of it very likely.

As for luck in gambling, a totally different thing from that we have been discussing, I think it must be relegated to the class of phenomena alluded to in the opening

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paragraph of this chapter—phenomena fundamentally unconnected but capriciously grouped together. In the case of a run upon number or colour at roulette, for instance, it is quite certain to my mind that there is no virtue whatever in the sequence as such, and that the causes determining the position of the ball are to be sought in the degree of energy expended in spinning it, and the amount of resistance it has to overcome. To speak of luck in the gambler's sense is like attributing a good strawberry-crop to the Sunday playing of bands in the park. The gambler sees two events in juxtaposition, and forthwith couples them. Luck could always be proved to exist by this process of reasoning. The ancients drew conclusions from the manner in which the blood of the sacrificial ox was spilt, and the modern 'spae-wife' tells your fortune from the arrangement of the tea-leaves in your cup, both methods of augury having been found fairly successful.

In connection with all games of chance a so-called theory of probabilities is very glibly quoted, and a good deal of money changes hands on the strength of it in one way or another. Every gambler, amateur or professional, who stakes his money on the turn of a wheel or a card, weighs as he thinks the chances of a certain event occurring. It is therefore a matter of some importance to ascertain whether there is anything or nothing in this so-called doctrine of chances.

What are the chances of a thunderstorm occurring in London on the 21st of April next year? This is a question as fairly calculable upon the theory of probabilities as any that could be put, always supposing certain data to be available. To solve it, one would take the weather record

Chance

of the 21st of April in London since the adoption of the present calendar, and if during that long period one found that the stormy days were in the proportion of two out of every hundred, one would conclude that the chance of a thunderstorm occurring on the 21st of April in any year was 50 to 1. Here we seem to be on pretty safe ground. Nevertheless there is a flaw in the assumption that the forces of nature as we understand them are not constant. Precisely the same difficulty arises with dice. You take a die which is marked on its faces with spots from 1 to 6, and you ask what is the chance on its being thrown of the 2 turning up? The unsophisticated person promptly answers 'one in six.' But is it? I take a die as I write, and throw it eighteen times. According to the mathematical formula, the result ought to be that the 2 should come up three times. What actually happens is this—the ace comes up three times, the 3 and the 6 five times each, the 4 three times, the 5 twice, and the 2 not at all. I try again, and the 2 comes up four times. In a third trial the 2 comes up only once.

In the face of this experiment where does the mathematical formula stand? The conventional answer is that eighteen is too small a number to take an average from—that you must take 10,000 throws, or 100,000, or 1,000,000, or even more. The moment we have to embark upon these wild figures, however, it is quite clear that we are dealing with a fallacy, and that the mathematical formula as above expressed is wrong. There is no certainty that 2 will turn up in the proportion of once in six times, however large a basis you take, for the simple reason that there is no uniformity in the throw. For everything that happens in nature there is no doubt a cause. Some slight difference

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in the physical conditions of the case determines whether, on a die being thrown, 2 or 4 or 6 shall turn up; but the results are not dependent upon any system of averages as such. The chief factors in the problem must be the force with which the die is thrown and the resistance which it encounters before coming to a state of rest. In order to obtain uniformity in the results you must obtain uniformity in the conditions, and not only is it impossible that all these can be taken into account, but they must vary considerably as between one thrower and another. From a thousand throws by one player certain uniform results might conceivably be obtained; but then, throughout the experiment the operator would have to be in an unvarying state of health and muscular efficiency. Even the density of the atmosphere would have to remain unchanged. All of which is tantamount to saying that the necessary conditions of the experiment are, in practice, unattainable.

The application of this argument to roulette, it will be seen, knocks the bottom out of the many gambling systems that are founded upon sequences in numbers or colours. In reality there is *no such thing as a game of chance*. Nothing happens even on the roulette-table without a cause. If the spinning ball stops at this figure rather than that, you may be sure there is some adequate physical reason for its doing so. It obeys the dynamical conditions of its spin, exactly as does a stone thrown by a boy in the street, or a shot fired from a gun. Nothing at first sight would seem more incalculable than the distance to which a shot from the 80-ton gun could be sent, and the force with which it would strike a target miles away. Nevertheless, if you know all the conditions of the case—the weight of the projectile, the force of the bursting charge, the twist of the

Roulette

rifling, the resistance of the air, and so on—a very near estimate of the results of the shot can be made. So with the ball at roulette. You have only to ascertain and calculate the various conditions of its movement—the force with which it is sent spinning, and the friction it has to overcome before attaining a state of rest—and the exact results of every coup at roulette could be told while the ball is still rolling.

But—for there is a but, and a big one—are those conditions ascertainable and calculable between the launching of the ball on its journey and its dropping into its hole? Plainly they are not. We can never tell, to begin with, the exact degree of nerve-energy expended each time by the man who turns the wheel and spins the ball; and if we did know this, there would still be no time to make the elaborate mathematical calculation of the other forces concerned before the ball stopped. All the details as to *manque* and *passe*, *pair*, *impair*, and colour, are the mere embroidery of the case; they do not affect the essentials of the problem as above stated.

If you threw a stone three times in succession with exactly the same amount of force through exactly the same resisting medium, you would not be surprised if it always fell exactly at the same spot. In fact, you would expect it to do so. Nor would it matter in the least whether there were other spots in the neighbourhood coloured or otherwise marked differently.

This is just what happens at roulette. A *croupier* spins the wheel and the ball, and when the resistance in each case is overcome the ball settles down in its compartment—then, and not till then. If the resistance were small enough the ball would spin till doomsday, as molecules

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spinning in the ether are supposed to do. As a matter of fact, it spins less than half a minute, the time varying, of course, in proportion to the force expended. First and last it is a question of dynamics—nothing more; as simple, therefore, as the kicking of a football to its goal.

One of the most conspicuous writers who have treated of roulette from the mathematical point of view is Mr. Karl Pearson, Professor of Applied Mathematics in University College, London. With the aid of tabulated results, covering hundreds of thousands of coups actually effected, Professor Pearson applied himself to testing the fairness of the tables at Monte Carlo, starting with a commendably clear idea, namely, that a carefully constructed and daily adjusted apparatus like the Monte Carlo wheel ought to yield even chances for or against a given event, red or black, odd or even. Naturally, he found considerable deviations from the purely theoretical standard. Thus, taking one list of results supplied him by a friend, he finds that in 16,019 spins 8053 red numbers, instead of 8009 or 8010, turn up. A deviation, it is true, but nothing very startling. Turning to the runs of colour, however, he is fairly carried off his feet. A fortnight's play of his own yields combinations of colour which, on the supposition that the game was one of chance, 'ought not to have occurred *once* had Monto Carlo roulette been played continuously since the beginning of geological time on this earth.' A friend was hardly more fortunate. His fortnight was 'so improbable that it was only to be expected once in five thousand years of continuous roulette.' In the play of another friend there occurred more wonderful deviations still, constituting odds of 263,000 to 1. Thus, while the totals of red and black are not so very far out,

Deviations at Roulette

‘the successions of reds and blacks set the laws of chance at defiance in the most remarkable manner. . . . There is too great a tendency to give red black red black red *ad infinitum*.’

On this basis Professor Pearson founds conclusions so inept that I must express my amazement at their coming from such an authority. Monte Carlo roulette, he contends, is not a scientific game of chance. ‘If the laws of chance rule,’ it is ‘the most prodigious miracle of the nineteenth century.’ It is ‘chaotic’ in its manifestations. And so on. Finally, we are told, ‘it is no exaggeration to say that such a conclusion is of the very highest moment for science.’ And that ‘science must reconstruct its theories to suit these inconvenient facts.’

Now if the apparatus were accurately constructed, and the two motions of the wheel and the ball, and the resistance to each, perfectly uniform, Professor Pearson would have a right to be surprised at variations occurring. As it is, he has no right to be surprised. The force expended varies with every coup, though croupiers do, from long practice, acquire the knack of bringing the ball to rest very near the spot intended—some of the more expert, indeed, can bring out zero with astonishing frequency. But in practice the croupiers spin anyhow. Moreover, they are changed at short intervals—every ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. So that, with the most perfect apparatus working under the most perfect mathematical law, uniform results are unattainable. No human being can calculate where the ball will rest, because he has not in his possession the data necessary to the calculation; but some practised gamblers (with their eyes wider open than Professor Pearson) feel that with the change of the

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spinning croupier there occurs a change in the nature of the results, and they try to regulate their play accordingly.

Old M. Blanc, the founder of the Monte Carlo tables, always professed to believe that some day or other a system that would destroy the bank would be invented. I take it, however, that he indulged in this profession of faith because he found it good for business. It was *pour encourager les autres*—the great principle which the industrious paraphrasts in the pay of the Monte Carlo administration keep so faithfully in view. Old M. Blanc could not have been such a fool as to believe that an infallible method of breaking the bank was possible under the existing conditions of play. The system he knew and understood was to establish so many points in favour of the bank. As to any other strategy that could be employed against him, he was so easy in his mind that nothing delighted him so much, just as nothing so much delights the present administration, as the arrival at the table of a client with a fortune in one hand and an infallible system in the other.

According to my theory, if we were able to follow the successive links of connection between an event and its cause, the element of chance would disappear from human affairs—everything would be certainty. As this causation exists in all cases, there is in fact no such thing as chance absolutely. But we do not see all the links, and the blank we fill up with the word chance, which, after all, is merely a confession of our ignorance.

This process of analysis we have worked out in roulette. Let us see how it applies to a horse-race. The tipster occasionally proclaims a 'cert,' and some degrees short of

Horse-racing

that comes the 'moral.' After that he falls back upon probability. As far as it goes, the tipster's method is the correct one. As between the probabilities of this or that horse winning out of a particular group of horses, he exercises his judgment on the facts known to him. He weighs the 'public form' of the animals; he has private information as to their latest doings; he knows the course over which they have to run, and the state of the course due to the weather. On the morning of the race he has quite a mass of important facts collected from which to draw his conclusions. Unfortunately he has not all the facts; indeed, some highly important ones escape him, and at present I do not see how these are ever to be obtained, or how, if obtained, the ordinary racing-man could, under the circumstances, work them out. They are chiefly concerned with the nervous condition of the horse and his rider, not only at the start but at every point of the race, and with the various resistances to be overcome in the atmosphere and on the turf. The 'personality' of the horse is certainly an element of the highest importance, and very little about that is ascertained. Every man knows how his capacity for work varies from day to day; it depends upon delicate variations in the nervous system which are difficult, if not impossible, to trace. So with the horse, which has a nervous organisation of extreme delicacy. The unknown conditions of the race we agree to call chance.

Practically the forms of gambling are infinite. Every commercial enterprise is gambling—that is to say, you risk a certain amount of money in the hope of winning a larger amount. The clergyman who inveighs against the betting-ring or the gaming-table is not unlikely himself to

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be an investor in a trading concern of some sort—say a railway—and he thus becomes essentially a gambler too. He puts down a certain stake in the hope that, without any exertion on his own part, it will yield him a return, but with the full knowledge that it may also, as the result of adverse circumstances, be swept into somebody else's pocket. High rates of interest, of which clergymen and pious old ladies are notoriously fond, are, in reality, a form of long odds; at the roulette-table they have their equivalent in staking upon the zero. We are all gamblers of some kind, and all that the law can do is to try to distinguish between forms of gambling which are beneficial and those which are hurtful to the community.

The law here gets upon very delicate ground, and so closely do the various forms of gambling run into each other that no satisfactory definition of what is or is not hurtful has yet been found.

What does a man do who insures his life? He bets a certain sum with an insurance company, which for this purpose may be regarded as a bookmaker, that he will die young; the company (acting upon information received from the stable, *i.e.* from the actuary) lay odds against that contingency. If the insurer does in truth die young he wins his bet, or in other words a much larger sum of money than he has actually paid in the shape of a stake; if, on the contrary, he lives to an extreme old age, it is the company that wins, since the premiums received with interest thereon exceed the amount of the policy, *i.e.* the sum they had staked. Of course, such a method of betting would be ruinous to the insurer if he stood alone, since he can only win by dying, and is therefore precluded personally in all cases from enjoying his winnings. But he

Life Assurance

does not stand alone. He is one of a syndicate, consisting of his family and relations, and it is good enough for him that his winnings should go to the syndicate of which he is a member, though the bet should only be won at the sacrifice of his life.

The whole transaction is essentially a bet, because, if the insurer did not hope to get more money out of the funds of the company than he paid into them, it would be simpler for him to pay the premiums from one pocket into the other, or into a savings-bank. On the other hand, the company, like the bookmaker, saves itself by 'hedging.'

Of all popular forms of gambling, life assurance is probably the least injurious. Moralists of all shades concur in approving it. Yet it runs on all fours with the practice of the Chinaman who horrifies these same moralists by offering himself as a substitute for execution on the understanding that a certain sum of money is to be paid to his family. And what is a soldier but a gambler, who accepts the odds of being shot by the enemy in consideration of a certain livelihood meanwhile? If he is killed in his first campaign he loses his bet; if, on the other hand, he attains to the dignity of a veteran, he may be regarded as having won the stake he risked.

Probably the worst form of innocent gambling is the Tontine, which at one time was highly popular. A number of people combine to buy an annuity. As one member after another dies off, the same sum continues to be divided among the survivors, each of whom finds his share increasing. Ultimately one person, the longest liver, takes the whole sum. This is the converse to life assurance. Whereas in life assurance the insurer backs himself to die young, the member of a Tontine backs himself to die old.

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Morally, the two transactions are on pretty much the same level, except that the member of a Tontine has every reason to desire the death of his fellow-members. There is a case on record of the sole survivor of a Tontine, having subscribed about £10 to begin with, becoming entitled at the age of ninety-seven to an annuity of £2500 a year.

The truth is that the principle of betting enters into all our relations of life. Its application to horse-racing is merely casual and local. I have known men bet in a railway carriage on the progress of two drops of moisture coursing down the window-pane. The heathen Chinese, who never saw a horse-race in his life, gets all the gambling excitement he requires, and that is a great deal, out of cards. In all gambling, however, 'luck' is only the unknown.

When we come to consider the various social superstitions with the good or bad luck that follows their believers, some modification of the foregoing principle is called for. There good or bad luck, if firmly believed in, has a trick of realising itself in a manner which will presently be made clear.

The 'thirteen' superstition is one of many relating to good or bad luck. Perhaps it is the most generally believed in of all. It is certainly to be met with in the most unlikely quarters. I doubt whether the average hostess in society, lady of light and leading as she may be, could seat thirteen at her dinner-table without a qualm. Nor, I think, are thirteen average guests to be brought together without some of their number feeling uncomfortable. On this point a personal experience of my own at a West End dinner, where the company were mainly literary and artistic, may be accepted as typical. We sat down somewhat late, and one short of our complement.

Thirteen at Table

Presently, while we were in the middle of the soup, the laggard, a literary man of some note, editor of one of the monthly magazines, arrived. He caught at a glance the number of guests seated at the table. We were twelve. 'Just my luck!' he cried; 'I see I make the thirteenth.' At once there was a small commotion, especially among the ladies of the party. We all thought it right to protest that we did not believe in the unluckiness of thirteen at table, and the late-comer was invited to take the vacant chair. But he had too much sense to sit down, and no doubt in their hearts the hostess and one or two others were very much obliged to him. For my part, I would have risked it, but I am not prepared to say as much for everybody else. So a small side-table was fitted up, at which the late-comer and one or two others took their seats, by which device the evil influence, if any, was understood to be counteracted.

That many people who give credence to these and kindred superstitions do not do so in a very active sense I am quite prepared to hear. They do not really believe that thirteen at table is unlucky, but they think it well, if possible, to be on the safe side. In illustration of this, let me mention a fact told me by a friend who is in the diplomatic service. He was one of the guests at a dinner given by the British Ambassador in Paris. Owing to one or two people being unable to come, the company found themselves sitting down thirteen at table. The hostess was equal to the occasion. She sent to the nursery for one of her little girls, who duly sat down to table and made the fourteenth. This lady did not believe in the superstition, oh, dear no! but she thought it well to be on the safe side.

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No. 13 bedroom in hotels is generally avoided. In many English hotels that number is mysteriously non-existent; on the Continent they shirk the difficulty by marking the fatal chamber 12 *bis*, a device which, on the score of childish simplicity, is on a par with that of seating a section of the thirteen guests at a side-table. Many people will refrain from taking any important step on the thirteenth day of the month. Friday continues to be thought an unlucky day, and indeed this superstition runs on all fours with that of number thirteen both being connected with the beginnings of Christianity. The most amazing feature of these beliefs is that they are held without anybody being able to explain how the presence of thirteen at the Last Supper, or the occurrence of the Crucifixion on a Friday—accepting these events as historical—could influence for evil the affairs of persons, principalities or powers at the present day. Supposing, in consequence of my being one of thirteen at a dinner-party, I am knocked down and killed by a railway train within the year, where is the link of connection—how does the ‘consequence’ work? For it is obvious that a great many mechanical forces must be brought into play in order to give effect to the superstition.

In fact, the causation is unthinkable; and this just shows how small a part reason plays in the lives of men. The great instrument to conjure with in this world is not reason, but dogma. It does not matter how incredible, how impossible, the dogma in itself may be, if only it is presented with some show of authority people will swallow it. Let charlatans of all sorts therefore rejoice. The age of pure reason has not yet dawned; nor will it do so in our time.

The Force of Dogma

Of course, a very little attention to the march of events would dispel all existing superstitions. On every day of the month, and on every day of the week, mercantile transactions of the utmost importance are initiated. It is not found in practice that those belonging to the thirteenth, or to Friday, are more unfortunate than the rest. It is not found that day or date influences either the birth or the death rate. The sole surviving passenger of the *Drummond Castle*, which sank off Ushant, occupied berth No. 13. He hesitated to take it on account of its evil associations, but he had no choice. He chanced it, and he proved to be the one passenger whose life was saved from the wreck. If anything could redeem number thirteen from its associations, surely it would be that experience. But the fact is already forgotten. It has not been assimilated by the public mind, and in the future, as in the past, thirteen will be regarded as an unfortunate number.

That such superstitions are wholly gratuitous or unfounded I am not prepared to say. If you are thoroughly convinced of the presence of some evil influence in your life, the conviction is bound to exercise a depressing effect upon your system, and perhaps in time bring about the very mischief predicted. This would be an example of the force of 'suggestion,' the importance of which no psychologist now denies. By the same means is explained the influence of spells and charms of all sorts, good and bad. The 'evil eye' does, in fact, do harm to those who believe themselves to be under its power. 'Suggestion' plays a large part in the cure of illness, and every doctor, whether of the old or the new school, practises it consciously or unconsciously. Who, indeed, ventures to tell

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a sick man that he is at death's-door? Is not all possible encouragement given him to think otherwise?

In science the power of suggestion is employed wholly for the purpose of doing the patient good; in superstition it is employed mainly to his detriment, so that a witch's muttered threats may be perfectly efficacious, provided that the victim has faith in the potency of the spell. So with charms that are worn for the purpose of warding off illness. It is very natural that a person wearing a charm and believing in it should be proof against dangers that would take effect upon another victim of superstition not so protected by a panoply of confidence and elation. That witches in the middle ages may have exercised a good deal of the power with which they were credited is therefore scientifically possible. At the present day in remote parts of the country, where credulity is rampant, they may still be able to cast a spell with effect. Absolute faith on the part of the victim is, however, an indispensable condition of their success. The shadow of a shade of doubt as to the witch's power and the spell is broken! 'Suggestion' ceases to operate.

In a general way one only hears of Lourdes when the pilgrimages are at their height, or when some specially remarkable cure is said to have been effected. But Lourdes is a living fact all the year round, and though, like other popular resorts, it has its season, which extends from May till October, it is never without its pilgrims supplicating the Virgin Mary to reverse the sentence of death or permanent disablement pronounced upon them by the medical faculty. In August and September the influx of incurables at Lourdes is enormous. I was fortunate in seeing the pilgrimage at its height. I say

Lourdes

fortunate, because it is only by seeing from twenty to thirty train-loads of the faithful arriving and departing daily, religious services in full swing at the famous Grotto, and in the chapel overhead, all day and all night, conducted by relays of priests before successive congregations of worshippers and sufferers all hoping to catch a breath of that special virtue which is supposed to descend upon the faithful and the truly believing—it is only, I say, when all the machinery of miracles is in motion, when the little town nestling in its Pyrenean valley is full of chanting processions of pilgrims, when the healing waters are surrounded by hundreds of the halt, the lame, and the blind, imploring Heaven to cure them of their ills, and waiting momentarily with passionate faith for a miracle to be wrought in their favour, that one can realise what place Lourdes holds in the religious world. It is the spot of all others on earth where the vault of Heaven is opened to the eye of the believer, where he can discern the far-off glory of the Throne and the radiant company of the saints, and where he feels he can make something of a personal and direct appeal to the Heavenly powers for the relief of his own puny and individual sufferings on earth.

Yes, Lourdes must be seen at the height of its season to be appreciated, and once seen in such circumstances it can never be forgotten. It is a place where one may easily go to scoff, and remain to pray. For the piety of the wailing and helpless crowds, the fervour of their prayers and responses, the faith that lights up their wan and disfigured faces, profoundly move the observer in spite of himself. Whatever one's own opinions may be, it is impossible to remain insensible to the surrounding influence.

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You know how magnetic is the feeling that possesses a great mass of people. Whether it be at a political meeting, at the play, or at some public 'function' that stirs up popular enthusiasm, if it be only a rousing service by the Salvation Army, the bystander is penetrated by the prevailing sentiment, and to some extent carried away by it. Well, the faith that fills the air at Lourdes is similarly contagious. I felt it as I entered the town. I seemed to breathe it and live in it, and I do not know that I have yet shaken off, or that I ever shall entirely shake off, this experience. Like everything else, of course, Lourdes affects different people differently. For myself, I can say that I was profoundly impressed, not, indeed, by the alleged miracles or the cures, all of which, so far as they are authenticated, science could no doubt explain, but by the pathos of so much human suffering, self-sacrifice, and hope, or, if you like, credulity.

Rightly to appreciate Lourdes, one must know how these mysteries began, and on what basis of ascertained fact they rest. The general reader, of course, knows a good deal about Lourdes. He has heard the story of Bernadette, the little peasant girl of thirteen, who while gathering sticks one bright afternoon near the now famous Grotto, saw a beautiful lady in white, who disclosed herself to be the Virgin, and who confided to this little *hallucinée* her desire that a chapel should be built hard by, and that processions of people should visit it. That Bernadette's story created an immense stir in the Roman Catholic world, that not only the Pope but Napoleon III. credited it, and that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims go to worship every year at this wonderful shrine, is matter of general knowledge. Yet I doubt whether any

Origin of the Miracles

adequate idea can be formed of Lourdes by any one who does not go there in order, like the doubting disciple, to see, touch, and handle for himself. At Lourdes every little fact of Bernadette's life, from the cradle to the grave, is known. On a marble slab erected near the Grotto are inscribed the actual words used to her by the Virgin, who spoke, it appears, not in the *patois* of the district, but in correct Parisian French.

The Lourdes legend of Bernadette and her visions of the Virgin Mary enable the sceptic to understand how the legend of Christianity itself might have grown up, had it been a superstition and nothing more. Many false prophets and Mahdis have arisen since the time of Christ, but none of them, with the exception of Mohamed and, perhaps, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon community, have prevailed. The newspaper has killed the prophet. Suppose a new Mohamed were to arise in any part of England, either claiming to have been born under miraculous conditions or to have been put to death and to have come to life again, all the newspapers would at once be on the track of the mystery. The resurrected prophet would be interviewed, and all who had witnessed the supposed miracle, or who could throw any light upon it, would be examined and cross-examined by investigators bent upon leaving no stone unturned to get at the facts. Perhaps there would be an official inquiry instituted—if the matter began to look serious—by the Home Office or the Local Government Board.

Under the conditions of publicity which prevail in this country at the present day, I do not see much chance for a miraculous visitation. It was otherwise at Lourdes in the year 1858. Lourdes was then an unknown village

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remote from civilisation. I do not suppose that the influences of the outer world had ever penetrated into the Pyrenean valley. Lourdes in 1858 might practically have been a village of the middle ages. The Roman Catholic Church, however, was there, inculcating its fascinating mysteries. It had obtained a hold upon the imagination of little Bernadette, who appears to have possessed the valuable gift of natural piety, and, such is the irony of Fate, this peasant girl has since exercised more influence in the world than probably the wisest of men.

Many people there are in the town of Lourdes able and proud to remember Bernadette, who, I may here explain, after her remarkable experience at the Grotto, took to religion, became a nun, lived a life of strict seclusion within convent walls, and died of a wasting illness about the age of thirty. The memoranda here used I jotted down outside a *café*, hard by a shop which is kept by a surviving brother of the little visionary. A flourishing trade is done at this shop in rosaries, crosses, and other Christian relics; and the fact of the shopkeeper's relationship to Bernadette is announced for the information of the pilgrims. He owes much, does this shrewd *commerçant*, to his relationship with the little girl who held converse with the Virgin at the Grotto in that memorable month of February in the year 1858. Something of the sanctity now attaching to Bernadette's name has fallen upon her worthy kinsman, and his trade in relics, I should imagine, is a lucrative one. Elsewhere in the town they show you the hovel where Bernadette was born, and on the upper floor of this, which you reach by a dilapidated stair, there is her little bedroom on view. The very bedding is said to be preserved as Bernadette

Bernadette's Life

left it, together with so intimate an article of her toilet as a chemise, now to be viewed only in a glass case. For a franc the aged and toothless guardian of this now sacred spot will tell you any number of anecdotes illustrative of the goodness and piety of the child-saint. He professes to have known her well as a little girl, and as he is a veteran, while she would by this time have been an elderly woman, there is no reason to doubt his word in that respect, though many years of parroting over the incidents of Bernadette's career may have rendered the details of his story unreliable.

A more favourable scene for the growth of a mystery than Lourdes in the year 1858 was probably not to be found. That may be why the Lourdes legend has been so successful in establishing itself in this sceptical age. Other mysteries of the same character, as is well known—like that of Knock in Ireland, where an alleged luminous apparition of the Virgin appeared on the chapel wall in 1880—have failed to obtain general credence.

Authentic portraits of Bernadette at different ages exist. At thirteen, when the visions appeared to her, she was under the average height, but rather stoutly built, with smooth black hair, a straight broad nose, an amiable mouth, and a limpid black eye—an engaging peasant girl who, in preparing for her first communion, had arrested the attention of her spiritual advisers by her piety and gentleness. Poor child! She appears to have got little out of this world. Despite the miraculous powers of the shrine which she instituted, she lived an ailing life, secluded for the most part behind the jealous walls of the Convent of Saint Gildas, at Nevers, submissive, docile, devout, a firm believer in her visions, until death carried

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her off in 1879 from gangrene of the bones—a terrible ailment, truly.

The Grotto, a shallow cave in a wall of rock, which is really one of the spurs of the Pyrenees, has long since lost its primitive character. It is partly enclosed by an iron railing, and all day long a stream of pilgrims passes through it. It is hung with hundreds of crutches, the contributions of the cured, and a furnace of candles, tended by a *gardien*, blazes day and night. Anybody may set up a candle upon payment of a franc. M. Zola did so while at Lourdes gathering material for his book on the pilgrimages. Among others, the candle trade has reason to bless the name of Bernadette Soubirous. And not this trade alone. Lourdes itself, from a pastoral village, has developed into a fair-sized town with an abundance of hotels and *cafés*, a large post and telegraph office, and, above all, a multitude of shops dealing in religious emblems and literature. From the railway station—a large one, created by the pilgrim traffic—to the Grotto, situated in the valley underneath, there is half a mile of street, lined exclusively with such shops, past which there files continually a mournful procession of invalids, going to or returning from the sacred spring, borne in Bath chairs, on stretchers, or hobbling along on crutches. Just outside the Grotto there is a pulpit occupied by relays of priests all day long. In a niche above the Grotto stands an image of the Virgin as seen by Bernadette, a beautiful lady in white, with a blue sash, white veil, and a yellow rose on each foot. In front there is a large macadamised open space filled with a perpetually renewed congregation of pilgrims and invalids following the services.

Lourdes a Centre of Infection

Those who can pass through the Grotto do so, and it is a pathetic sight, that of the devout visitors kissing the bare rock, and clinging to it reverently as long as they can under the vigilant eye of the *gardien*, who keeps moving them on. The rock is greasy with the embraces of the faithful. All sorts of cancerous and disease-ravaged lips and faces are pressed against it by sufferers hoping that the solid stone by force of entreaty may yield them some virtue. That Lourdes is a great centre of infection for the most loathsome diseases that afflict humanity is freely alleged by the sceptical, and I am not prepared to deny it. Such a congregation of invalids as one sees here under a sweltering southern sun is well calculated to horrify the medical mind. After kissing the rock it is the proper course to drink at the spring, and all sorts of lips touch the tin pannikins in which the water is served. The poor pilgrims have no fear of infection, however. To them Lourdes is sacred. No evil, they think, can come out of Lourdes! And possibly such evil as there may be is outweighed by the good.

Yes; the good—an admission I should hardly have been prepared to make before seeing the place with my own eyes. If there is a shred of genuine faith in the pilgrim, it cannot but be broadened and deepened by his experience of Lourdes. I do not know that the motive which brings many of these supplicants is the highest. They come to be 'healed,' after trying the science of man in vain. And what a terrible variety of diseases is theirs! If all the hospitals of London were emptied they would not yield such a mass of afflicted humanity as one sees in a single afternoon at Lourdes; or so pitiable a spectacle—for it is mainly the sufferers from chronic disease that

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seek the benefit of a miracle. From their journeys of four-and-twenty, thirty-six, and even forty-eight hours in the hospital trains they arrive at Lourdes in a deplorable state of physical exhaustion, yet buoyed up with the hope of being enabled, by supernatural aid, to hold out in this vale of tears a few years longer. The desire to live seems to grow as the case becomes more and more desperate, until it is almost a mania. Old people are there in the last stages of dissolution, hungering for a little more life and ready to make any compact with Heaven to ensure it. The pity of it all! But let motives be what they may, the effect of the scene at the Grotto must be spiritually elevating to all engaged in it. The cry for Heaven's pity that goes up from the ailing throng in response to the priest's exhortations moves one to tears. What terrible sincerity one reads in these poor upturned yearning faces, many of them too loathsome in their disfigurement to be looked upon without a shudder! They will, they *do* believe—that is what many seem to say. Some there are, of course, ecstatic in their confidence. But others have been there before, year after year, and are hoping almost against hope to find favour with the Virgin who has hitherto denied them their prayer, by reason they fear of their unworthiness.

A sore memory with the ecclesiastical authorities of Lourdes is the unmasking of the famous French impostor, Delanoy, who had for years deceived the medical faculty in Paris with a pretence of paralysis, and who, betaking himself to Lourdes and dipping in the holy spring, announced himself as miraculously cured, to the great joy of the local clergy and the faithful, and the bewilderment of the scoffing public. I think we may take it that

Impostors at Lourdes

Delanoy's cure, like so much else in his career, was pretence, though, strictly speaking, that was not proved. That he was a born thief and swindler is certain, and, therefore, a most unlikely vessel for the mercy of the Lady of Lourdes. It was his ungovernable dishonesty that ruined the most promising career, surely, that ever opened itself up to a knave. After his cure he was given a lucrative post as superintendent of an hospital at Lourdes for the reception of afflicted pilgrims, and, in addition, he became the recipient of valuable presents from the faithful in all parts of the world, begging his prayers for them as a *persona grata* with the Virgin Mary. He could have lived all his life in clover, but the passion for adventure being strong within him he could not resist the temptation of stealing a few hundred francs, with which he decamped. He next turned up in Paris, where, by successfully pretending to be insane, he was unguardedly left in a position that enabled him to steal a few hundred francs more. This was Delanoy's last exploit. The police got upon his track, and before the Assize Court of the Seine he was sentenced to a term of penal servitude. An impostor he must have been throughout.

Let us see what was the evidence for his miraculous cure. Between the years 1883 and 1889, as a patient supposed to be suffering from locomotor-ataxy, he was examined by no fewer than sixteen hospital doctors, some of them, like Dr. Charcot, men of world-wide reputation, and they one and all independently certified him to be suffering from an almost, if not quite, incurable form of paralysis of the spine. It was with such credentials that he hobbled into Lourdes on crutches in 1889 ; and he had

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not been in the holy water a minute before he rose up 'cured,' and walked about on his previously useless legs with the vigour, as one witness said, of a country postman. Now I ask, could there, in this world, be a better-attested miracle than that? Impossible! Science and scepticism both had to own themselves beaten. If Delanoy could only have stuck to his imposture, which he had ample inducement to do, for he was making a famous living at it, besides being almost worshipped by the believers in poor little Bernadette's vision of thirty years before—the vision of the Virgin by the spring—science would have had the hardest nut to crack that the Church has ever set before it. So much for evidence of apparently the most irrefragable character. There remains the question: Was Delanoy really a paralytic, and was he miraculously 'cured' after all? Alas! there is his undoubted criminal record staring us in the face. If he was the subject of a miracle, then Heaven's mercy was sadly misplaced. Yes, truly a most remarkable case. Take him how we will, Delanoy must live in the annals.

That miraculous cures do take place all the faithful believe. The town is full of pious literature recording cases; and the rumours of miracles are on everybody's lips. Nobody questions the stories that circulate; everybody is only too anxious to believe them. After the nerves of the crowd have been strung to their highest tension comes the dipping in the piscines, which, like the Pool of Siloam, are supposed to effect the miraculous healing. They are closed baths, receiving their water from the holy spring first pointed out to Bernadette by the Virgin. The expectant crowd are thrilled by the words of the

Cures

officiating priest. There are appeals to Heaven in every key of supplication: *Seigneur, sauvez nos malades! Ayez pitié de nous!* With a word or a gesture the priest commands the crowd to kneel, to fold their hands, to kiss the earth. They obey. Meanwhile the dipping in the piscines goes on. Every moment the praying becomes more fervent, the words of the priest more thrilling—one would almost suppose that a miracle was to be wrung from Heaven by dint of entreaty. At the climax of the scene it is rare that some invalid does not emerge from the piscines exclaiming that he or she is cured, whereat the Magnificat bursts forth from a thousand throats, while the attendants help the object of the miracle to reach the *bureau de constatations* hard by, where a medical man tests the case according to such information as can be given him. Too often the supposed cure is only a temporary exaltation. I saw an old man, lame or paralytic, calling out '*Guéri! guéri!*' ('Cured! cured!'), try to hobble along without his crutches, and fall down pitifully with a moan of despair.

Such failures there are every day. Yet everybody has faith. Occasionally a cure is recorded, though the facts upon which it is based may be too meagre to satisfy the sceptical mind. The *miraculé* declares that he is healed, and the official in the bureau, finding him sound in wind or limb, accepts the declaration without knowing, of course, what was his state before he was plunged into the sacred bath.

As to the nature of the so-called cures, I think we may take it that nervous complaints are beneficially affected by the moral surroundings of Lourdes in conjunction with the dip into the cold water. The force of 'suggestion' is

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there carried to its greatest height. But the voluminous records of cures cover every sort of ailment from consumption to cancer and scrofula; and that is the crux of the business, seeing that one such miracle—only one—if properly authenticated, would bring the whole medical profession to their knees. Unfortunately the faithful cling to one set of beliefs and the sceptics to another, and neither party makes any impression upon its opponent. With regard to the serious cases, there is just one remark to be made. Nature herself sometimes brings about the most marvellous recoveries; and, of course, any such case happening among the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who annually visit Lourdes would be credited to the *genius loci*.

The Holy Coat of Trèves, like other charms, also works its cures. Not long ago an indiscreet pamphleteer at Trèves was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for the curious offence of slandering the Roman Catholic Church in connection with the exhibition of the Holy Coat. The unfortunate man had doubtless persuaded himself that he was serving the interests of truth, but the proved virtues of the Holy Coat were too much for him. The great feature of the case was the statement of the local bishop upon oath that at the last exhibition of the Holy Coat several miracles occurred. Details of the miracles are not given, but we may take the bishop's word for them. In my boyhood I knew an old lady, credited with supernatural powers, who was very successful in curing a variety of ailments by means of charms. Voltaire has remarked that incantations and arsenic may destroy whole flocks of sheep. With the simple-minded patients of the old lady I speak of, the incantations sufficed to produce

The Holy Coat

the effects desired. Nothing more was needed, except, indeed—what I am presupposing in the case of the Holy Coat and the miracles reported from Lourdes—a profound belief on the patients' part in the potency of the curative agent.

CHAPTER V

The Distribution of Happiness—Varieties of Character—Sorrows of the Millionaire—The Game of Money-making—Pleasure and Pain—Futility of Externals—Bismarck's Confession—The Restlessness of Democracy—Who are the Happiest?—The Use of Wealth—The New Aristocracy—Value of the Spendthrift Heir—'Sharps and Flats'—Illusory Suffering—Carrying Power of the Nerves—Cruelty—Vegetarians and Plant Life—Sympathy between Men and Animals.

COULD an authentic Blue Book be issued showing the distribution of happiness in this country, it would probably be the greatest surprise and marvel of the century. The popular idea is that wealth and happiness go together. Wealth is like greatness—some people are born to it, others achieve it, and others, again, have it thrust upon them. In no case, so far as my observation goes, is the result all that the outsider commonly thinks it. To be born rich is to miss a good deal that the wise consider life to be worth living for. It is to miss the stimulus to exertion and the pride of success. In place of these it gives one an easy and aimless existence, the monotony of which, after a time, becomes as irksome as the anxious struggle for a livelihood from day to day. Say you achieve wealth. Well, then, you have all the cares and troubles of a busy life ; and such pleasure as you have lies in your work precisely as if you had no fortune at all. How often do we see this ! It is the story of the successful

Happiness

tradesman who, retiring with a competence, pines without his shop, and dies of having nothing to do. To come to the third instance! Suddenly to become rich after being poor is no doubt a pleasurable sensation, but custom inevitably stales it, as it does every pleasure that is external to ourselves, and in the end the patient, if I may so term him, is in no better case than rich man number one. He is probably worse off, because he has indulged in anticipation, and has consequently courted disappointment. If he is well-advised he will go on with his most congenial occupations, whatever they may be, in which event he will fare pretty much like his fellow-men.

The real pleasure of living consists not in the disuse, but in the active exercise of our faculties, mental and physical. With such exercise, supposing ourselves to be normally constituted, we are happy; without it we are inevitably bored. Pleasure and pain depend upon the working of the nervous system, which again is a constitutional endowment quite independent of any balance at our banker's. If we could maintain our nervous system at a pleasurable tension always, I dare say we should always be happy; but that is impossible. Every strain upon the nerves, including the strain of joyous emotion, involves a reaction; for the bodily machine must return to its equilibrium. It is like a musical instrument which will only yield the sounds appropriate to it or break. Consequently among rich men and poor alike there are all degrees of happiness. We cannot escape from our organisations. The slang phrase as to our being 'built' this way or that is curiously apt. It really expresses a great truth, and amid the varying conditions of life it ought to be our greatest consolation.

The socialistic assumption is that all men have the same

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capacity for enjoyment, and that you have only to equalise the conditions of life in order to diffuse happiness equally over the face of the earth. As a corollary it is held, or at least implied, that all men possess the same mental and moral nature—a notion which serves as the basis of many Utopian schemes, particularly of the Socialist order. Yet these two articles of belief, underlying so much of our social system as at present organised, will be found on examination to be wholly erroneous. A philosopher who asserted that all men possessed the same degree of muscular strength, or that they were all of the same height and weight, might account himself lucky if he were set down merely as a fool and not as a lunatic, since there exists both ocular and tangible proof that he is mistaken; but when we leave the physical and go into the moral and intellectual field, the doctrines of equality are preached with the sublimest confidence, because the facts of the case do not happen to lie on the surface. We can tell at a glance whether a man is tall or short. To discover whether he is a knave or a fool requires a somewhat closer study, but this question is just as much determined as the other by constitutional circumstances over which the victim has no control. Nature does not make all her goods of the one pattern. She turns out big pots and little pots, pots that are cracked and pots that are sound; and this brings me to the point I wish to insist upon—namely, that among the faculties more or less developed, more or less perfect in individuals, like hearing, or seeing, or feeling, is this capacity for happiness, for enjoying life independently of circumstances.

Of the vanity of wealth as a source of happiness *per se* the late Baron Hirsch, who left a fortune of many millions,

Wealth and Happiness

is a striking example. During a not very long life—he died at sixty-five—the deceased millionaire acquired at least four fortunes. First, he inherited a fortune from his father, a Jewish baron of Bavaria; he obtained another on his marriage; and a third came to him, comparatively early in life, from his business as a banker in Belgium. With all this wealth, which was his by the age of thirty-five, he was not content. Like *Oliver Twist*, he wanted more; and he made it, to the tune of millions and more millions, out of railway construction—a form of enterprise which has proved itself in other cases a more prolific source of wealth even than the brewing of beer. On the popular theory that wealth and happiness are identical, Baron Hirsch ought to have been an infinitely happy man. Fairly apportioned, his means would have furnished forth a thousand competences; and, of course, there was no sort of personal gratification, procurable with money, that he could not command. Yet there is evidence that the master of these many millions got no more out of life than the ordinary citizen who barely succeeds in paying his way.

Just as it is not death that matters, but the dying, so in the case of money-making the end is nothing; the only thing worth considering is the means. To a certain order of mind there is happiness in adding pound to pound, but none in sitting down to spend the fortune so acquired. The pleasure of the money ends with the effort expended in making it. That is a very common experience. How often do you find the successful tradesman falling a prey to boredom and worse when, in obedience to the representations of his family, he retires from business? He gives up the one thing that made life tolerable—his work, which kept his faculties healthily employed, and thereby

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produced the sense of happiness, which is in the main physical and mental well-being. That the possession of money gives one a comfortable sense of independence, especially if one has been in the thick of the battle of life, is very true; but a modest competence procures this satisfaction as surely as great wealth, which, *somme toute*, so far as the individual is concerned, resolves itself into mere rows of figures in a book. Whether a man is worth one million or twenty millions can matter to him nothing at all; and the most enjoyable portion of Baron Hirsch's life, I venture to think, was that in which he was engaged in amassing his several fortunes.

A curious characteristic of the human mind is that, when relieved of one set of worries, such as the necessity of earning to-morrow's dinner or discharging the obligations of quarter-day, it forthwith fashions for itself others. Baron Hirsch's great trouble (apart from natural sorrows like the early death of his only son) was that he never received the recognition in European society to which he thought himself entitled. Amid the magnificent hospitalities with which he courted popularity, he himself lived the life of an ascetic, refraining from tobacco, and drinking nothing stronger than a little red wine and water. He tried charity on an unprecedented scale, but here he suffered from a sense of failure and also from the ingratitude of many of his *protégés*. Besides which, his known liberality caused him to be surrounded by toadies, flatterers, and would-be blackmailers. An intimate describes him in his latter days as 'a disappointed man'—a terribly significant epithet to apply to the master of twenty millions sterling.

The modern game of money-getting is a very curious one to the looker-on; but if you can take a calm and com-

The Millionaire and the Man

prehensive view of it, it proves nothing so much as those essential limitations of human nature upon which, in one form or another, I have often insisted. Men gamble with thousands until the word ceases to have any meaning for them : and as no money actually passes—nothing, indeed, but scraps of paper—you might just as well substitute the the word ‘counters’ for thousands, and the game would proceed as before. Engaged in large financial transactions on paper, one loses all sense of the value of money in its proper function as a medium of exchange. The financial magnate realises with difficulty how large a part a sovereign can play in the life of a humbler fellow-creature. To do him justice, it is not the idea of wealth that fires his zeal in the money-market. He plays for thousands as a school-boy plays for marbles, and it is not the money that interests him but the game.

Of every millionaire it may be said that he is a man first and a millionaire afterwards ; and viewed from another planet or, say, from another plane of existence, the man and the millionaire would bear the same relation to each other as Monsieur Perrichon and Mont Blanc in Labiche’s famous comedy—a very big Monsieur Perrichon and a Mont Blanc of the tiniest proportions. When the man has a stomach-ache the millionaire winces ; the biggest disasters of the millionaire, on the other hand, may leave the man untouched.

And after all is said and done, perhaps the millionaire has not spent a farthing more on himself than the humblest clerk in his employment. He may keep up an establishment of thirty servants, but twenty-nine of these are waiting upon each other ; it is the odd one who does all that our poor Cræsus may require in the way of

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attendance. And what mean those enormous fortunes that we read of as being proved—personalty so much?

Personalty is all out of interest
This: that although the money has been flowing into the testator's coffers, it has remained there. It has not flowed out again to gratify its owner's tastes or caprices. So far as he is concerned, it has been practically non-existent. For the only way to get anything out of money is to spend it; one cannot suck a sovereign as one would a lozenge. And alas! alas! in spending it you make this sad discovery, that you can only eat one dinner a day and occupy one room of your mansion at a time. Also, that as regards the habits and necessities of life you are just as weak and as limited as your neighbours. If you have a cold on the chest you will find that a common mustard-plaster will do it more good than an application of bank-notes.

The ordinary salutation to a millionaire is 'How do you do? I hope you are well,' precisely as it would be to Brown or Robinson; for the great man may be as full of aches and pains as other people. The truth is that, after a certain very modest sum, representing food, clothes, and shelter to the individual, and therefore within the reach of all but the poorest, wealth becomes a financial expression—it is a column of figures in a book, and nothing more. You may multiply your servants in livery and your town and country houses, but you cannot cheat your organisation, or arrest the march of time, or escape the penalties of surfeit or excess in any direction.

Many people, by dint of hard work or good fortune, attain in their later years to a position of influence or affluence which, in their early manhood, would have appeared to them synonymous with happiness. They are

Happiness and Physical Organisation

still not different, however. They are the same men or women as before, taking the same view of life, feeling the same exaltations and depressions, the fact being that the possessions they looked upon as happiness were, after all, mere externals.

Happiness, in short, is a question of physical organisation. The smooth working of the physical machine is happiness, which is only destroyed by a jar of some kind in the mechanism. No one, however, can pass through life without a jar—nay, without frequent jars. One's condition of health varies ; and if that does not, there are still griefs, vexations, hopes, fears, and ambitions to harass the mind and destroy the perfect equilibrium which is happiness. As no two people are organised alike, there are infinite degrees of happiness experienced even when the surroundings are the same. You will find one person bright and optimistic, and another, living under the same circumstances, morose and misanthropic. There are Mark Tapleys who are always jolly, and Scrooges who are never jolly. Dickens does reform Scrooge, who from being a miser, hard as flint, is changed by a warning vision into a nice and benevolent old gentleman. But this is a purely fanciful picture of human nature. The Scrooges never change, any more than the Mark Tapleys.

The human organisation accommodates itself very readily to its conditions, whatever they may be. A man, let us say, suddenly comes into a fortune. For a week he fails to realise it. In another week he gets accustomed to it ; and then his life goes on as before. The key is changed, but not the tune. In the case of one born to greatness, the key, so to speak, is pitched high from the first. You are the eldest son of a monarch, let us say, and you live in

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the shadow of a throne, in the hope some day of obtaining the succession. Suppose your ambition is realised, your lift in life is less, comparatively speaking, than that of the clerk or cashier who becomes head of the firm. The young man now swaying the destinies of Russia had from boyhood looked forward to being Czar. That was his life. The honour came to him earlier than he had reason to expect, but he had already, we may be sure, in his waking dreams discounted it. The coronation ceremonial was to him neither more nor less than that which comes to the average man on his wedding-day. The church, the parson, the service, the music, the bridesmaids, the best man, the rice, the slippers, the going away! All half-reality, half-dream. *Toute réflexion faite*, I do not see that a coronation, even to the chief actor in it, can be more than that.

Securely seated on the throne—securely, that is to say, according to the ordinary rules of tenure of human life, which in the palace is just as uncertain as in the hut—is one uniformly happy and contented? I fear not, because after all a king or an emperor is made up of a stomach, a nervous system, and a brain, like other men. There is nothing in his anatomy to justify the supposition that he is exempt from the ordinary laws of human life, and, as a matter of fact, not a few kings have had to take their turn at being ordinary men; in which position, by the way, they were not distinguished above their fellows. The rate of mortality on thrones is very much the same as the averages of the Registrar-General.

All of which points to the conclusion that, if externals matter little or nothing to the lives of common people, they are equally insignificant in the case of the great

The Democratic Fetish

rulers of the earth, who, if they are men of sense, must sometimes wonder how it is that they, instead of the meanest of their subjects, happen to be riding on the crest of the wave. If they are men of sense they will also immediately reflect, as their envious inferiors usually do not, that, after all, it does not matter—that their lives have still to be lived on the universal plan.

It is interesting in this connection to recall a statement of Prince Bismarck's, made to a deputation of his admirers, namely, that it was a mistake to class him as a happy man. He had had his moments, his flashes of happiness, one of his best having been when he shot his first hare, but all reckoned up they would not, he said, cover more than four-and-twenty hours of his long and, as the world would say, successful career.

The fact that happiness is a sort of mirage, constantly luring us on to disappointment, accounts for much of the so-called democratic movement of the day. It is the cause of all our restlessness in politics, the constant clamouring of the people for this or that change which is always going to inaugurate the millennium. For the next hundred years or so, if the democratic fetish should last so long, a democratic government will necessarily be a government bursting with new measures, full of initiative, ready at any moment to try change for change's sake. In due time the enfranchised masses will learn that the pursuit of an ideal society is vanity, that through all changes of system man—imperfect man—remains the same. The unattainable, the unrealisable, these are our aims, when we have any. Happily for them, the great majority of people are not pursuing aims. They are living their lives from day to day, putting in their time,

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and snatching what contentment or happiness may come their way meanwhile. The optimism of the poor is well-known to all observers. Where other consolations fail there is the consolation of religion, which, in all its forms, promises that in the world to come the inequalities of this world will be redressed: and it is a consolation at the service of the dyspeptic rich as well as the hungry poor.

Many of the possessions that are popularly supposed to make for happiness do not. Wealth is one; education is another. Never has a truer word been written than that of the Preacher: 'In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' There is probably a far greater measure of happiness among the lower animals than among human beings, and more among the unenlightened than the so-called superior races and classes. Yes, the author of Ecclesiastes (Solomon, or another) managed to strike out a very excellent generalisation; and he would have been still more emphatic had he lived in our own time. The railway, the steamship, the telegraph, the daily newspaper, are all so many agents for the promotion of unhappiness. In olden times it must have been comparatively easy for the peasant or 'villain,' moving in his little circle, living his little round of existence, to be content with his lot. It is more difficult now, with one's horizon so enormously extended. But even so, I should be inclined to place the agricultural hind on a higher plane of happiness than the brilliant author of *The Foundations of Belief*.

Who, then, are the happiest? First and foremost, I should say, the healthy, then the sanguine (among whom I would include the truly religious), and finally the conceited, the selfish, and the ignorant. As to wealth and

Who are the Happiest?

the material luxuries it may procure, it is worthy of remark that the majority of rich men do not devote their means to the purpose which the poor usually have in mind. In fact, many of them do not spend more than the ordinary citizen. Rich men there are whose personal expenditure might be set down at a hundred a year, or even less. Frugality is in their nature, and they maintain it to the end. Others are condemned to frugal courses by their bodily ailments. In their envy of the rich, the poor fall into the same error as the schoolboy who looks forward to unlimited supplies of jam and sweetstuff when he shall have plenty of money of his own. Manhood being reached, the disillusioned youngster thinks no more of his sugar-plums.

The one advantage which many men find in the possession of money is that it gives them confidence, a sense of independence, and power. But then you have the feeling, without money at all, if you happen to be 'built' that way. Everybody knows the man who, whatever his circumstances may be, thinks himself one of the cleverest and handsomest of his species. You can see this by his jaunty step and self-satisfied air. If he is not conceited on his own account, he sometimes is on account of those around him; there are no children like his children, and nobody in general so gifted as his connections and dependants. What if the world does not use him well? So much the worse for the world, with its absurd lack of appreciation. Now *that* is one of the happiest of men; and if the reader will analyse for himself the rough list of contented types that I have indicated, he will see that happiness, the one great boon of life, is by no means as unequally distributed as one is apt to

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believe. Even the pessimist has his secret joys, because, in denouncing or despising the existing order of things, he is flattering himself as to how much better *he* could have organised society. Pessimism is often a subtle form of vanity. You may test that by occasionally proving the pessimist to be wrong. Will he be overjoyed to find that things are really not so bad as he had asserted? Not at all. His *amour propre* will be hurt merely. So equally, I am sorry to say, would be that of the ordinary philanthropist if he were proved to be on the wrong tack. I am not sure that it would not be a painful shock to many good men to learn that there were really other roads to Heaven than that which they are travelling.

Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, what are they, scientifically speaking? Merely an efficient or an inefficient expenditure of nerve-energy! If an organ contains an abundance of stored-up nerve-force, it responds pleurably to a stimulus; in the contrary case it responds painfully, or not at all. The feeling of being well or ill, happy or unhappy, joyful or oppressed—a mere question of nerve-force! When our organs—stomach, limbs, or what you will—are overcharged with this vital principle, we feel a craving to employ them, and the consequent discharge of the stored-up energy gives us relief or pleasure. Life is then worth living. When, on the other hand, our systems are feeble, and the stimulus of air in our lungs or food in our stomachs is in excess of the nerve-energy which is there to meet it, the result is weariness or pain. Life is then a burden.

If you exercise an appetite too freely you use up the nerve-energy that keeps it active; it ceases to respond, and you are satiated with what was at first a pleasure.

Tests of Distinction

This is what the voluptuary finds to his cost. This is the scourge of the self-indulgent. An acquired taste is the result of a special set of nerves being called into activity ; but abuse these, and the result once again is a cloying of the appetite.

From the social point of view the subject of money has, in these days, acquired enormous importance. Time was when the amassing of money as a pursuit was thought to be beneath the notice of a gentleman. Theoretically, some sort of disconsideration attaches to it still ; but the theory is weakening, and apparently the day is not far distant when the millionaire who presents himself with a banker's credentials will be admitted to any society without question. Already a poor nobleman yields the *pas* socially to the plebeian millionaire. Notoriously the Vanderbilt family have been able to contract a matrimonial alliance with one of the proudest names in Burke by reason of their millions ; so that, in some sort, an aristocracy of wealth is beginning to take the place of the old-fashioned aristocracy of blood, which itself was a bastard offshoot of the still older aristocracy of personal valour and prowess. In this latest phase of social evolution there is nothing that need occasion alarm. Tests of distinction there have always been and always will be. There was originally, as I have said, the valour test (now, alas, ignored so completely that a possessor of the Victoria Cross is allowed to find his way to the workhouse !). Then came the blood test, which has had a long run in history. For a generation or two past, culture and literary or artistic genius have had their turn. Now we are entering upon the period of the money test, which promises for the time to absorb or supersede all others.

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Although there is still a disposition in some quarters to despise it, I do not know that the money test will yield results inferior on the whole to those of pedigree, which has certainly a good deal to answer for. To be able to amass, administer, and keep a large fortune implies the possession of certain qualities which the world has agreed to esteem, and of which the inheritance of rank and title is no guarantee. That the effects of enormous wealth accumulating for generations in the hands of a single family would be evil is no doubt true, but to some extent Nature provides against this contingency by introducing the spendthrift heir, and surrounding him with such useful agents for the dissipation of wealth as the gambling companion and the harlot. The spendthrift heir is seldom long in coming. It is a matter of common observation that a fortune laboriously saved in one generation is usually dissipated in the next, or the next again; and in this useful process—for it is useful to the community, though reprobated in the individual—it is curious to note the part played by ‘bad company,’ male and female. The blacklegs who ease giddy heirs of their wealth on the turf or at the gaming-table, the money-lenders who fleece them, the women with whom they squander their substance in riotous living—all these are denounced as the pests of society. In reality they play as valuable a part in the social economy as the supposed noxious vermin in agriculture, which the farmer ignorantly destroys until he learns by experience his mistake. They are the despised earthworms of the social system, perpetually stirring and renewing its substance, breaking it up, rendering it permeable, wholesome, and fertile. Fortunate it is that Nature should be so much wiser than man!

The Vanity of Riches

And just as there are spendthrifts in each succeeding generation, so there are 'sharps' born to exploit them. It is the natural law. Very sound, therefore, is the instinct of the enriched financier or tradesman to invest in land and become a country gentleman, if he means, as the saying goes, to found a family and perpetuate his name through the generations. The law of entail, against which some declaim with so much fervour, is one of the most potent of human devices for the maintenance of a family name.

The measure of happiness belonging to all of us is great or small according to our constitutions; it can be filled up to the brim by the simplest means—by the so-called necessities of life, in fact—and you can no more add to it by an habitual indulgence in luxuries than you can pour a quart of beer into a pint pot. Wealth happens just now to be the accepted symbol of happiness, and Socialists agitate for a redistribution of it in the vain hope that they will thereby add to the pleasures of humanity. Where the bare necessities of life are wanting, there is of course pain. But a beef-and-beer-fed Socialist has no reason to envy the millionaire his ingots. After exerting himself for half a lifetime to accumulate money, the rich man who is gifted with common sense can only sit down and marvel at the vanity of it all. He clings to his ingots, of course, because he knows of nothing better to do; but the Socialist, when he got them, would probably feel that he had been grasping at a shadow.

Well it is that the facts should be as I say, otherwise the condition of society would be too painful to contemplate. Other considerations, too, require to be taken into account. Probably the greater part of the cruelty,

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suffering, and hardship which we see around us every day has no existence except in our own imaginations. This reflection I put forward with diffidence, because I am afraid it may be very shocking to a certain class of minds; but I am not sure that there is not as much to be said for it as for many respected theories now current. Perhaps I am putting the case a little too vaguely. Let me particularise. The most prevalent cause of suffering among human beings is supposed to be poverty. We see some wretched outcast in rags, cold, hungry, and homeless, and at once we conclude that his or her life in such circumstances is one prolonged pang. But is it so? Can it be so according to such laws of Nature as we understand? This may be a startling question, but it is one that will bear thinking out, though of course if the proposition were verified, or could be verified, it would be subversive of a great many of our established ideas, and knock the bottom out of many well-intentioned schemes of philanthropy. Physiology has placed this fact beyond all question, that our thinking and feeling system is a sort of mechanism, liable, like any other, to get deranged or out of repair. The mechanism may be good or bad to begin with, efficient or non-efficient, but as it is turned out of Nature's factory, so it works. Now, all sensation that we experience depends upon the carrying power of the nerves. As this is great or small, so we feel much or little, and if the nervous system is dead or numbed, we feel nothing at all. It is very probable, on this showing, that no two human beings feel exactly alike, and that we can only guess at the intensity of each other's sensations. But this is not my point. What I wish to say is that, according to all experience, the nerves will not and cannot be

Nerve-Reaction

made to remain permanently at tension. No sensation can be lasting. The nerves—for all feelings of whatever kind depend upon nerves—simply will not keep up the strain. After remaining on the stretch for a longer or shorter time, according to the strength of the stimulus, they inevitably relapse into their normal state when their possessor feels as he does usually. Moreover, a sensation often repeated dulls such perceptions as we possess. To a moderate degree of hunger or cold the system is no doubt sensitive; but even to these sensations we do somehow accommodate ourselves. We get, so to speak, upon a working basis with regard to them, just as the eye after a time accommodates itself to a semi-darkness, or the ear of a Londoner to the roar of traffic in the streets.

What great grief, however poignant, lasts more than a very short time in its full intensity? Is there any grave, the sight of which after a lapse of five-and-twenty years would cause us more than the faintest emotion? The widow has been known to wear her weeds for five-and-twenty years, but in that case they have long outlasted her grief. In the first shock of bereavement you wonder that the sun should shine or the birds sing; you resent the happy faces you meet in the street; you neglect your meals. Soon, however, all this changes, and in a week, without being able to own to yourself that your grief is in any way assuaged, you are in a position to order beef or mutton for your dinner.

If, then, my theory of nerve-reaction under all sorts of strain, pleasurable or painful, be true even to a moderate extent, how beneficent after all Nature may be, and how well-ordered that Universe against which, in our littleness and our ignorance, we are so often tempted to exclaim.

The Human Machine

The bearing of this argument upon the great question of cruelty is obvious. Our conceptions of cruelty are singularly limited and partial—one might almost say capricious. I do not know whether any member of the Humanitarian League has ever practised the gentle art of impaling a live worm on a hook and throwing it into the water in the hope that some wretched fish may allow itself to be drawn out of its element by the entrails. It would be no surprise if he had ; for the gentlest and most God-fearing men have been anglers. If the conscience of the professional humanitarian is easy on this score, he cannot be acquitted at least of destroying life daily for the extremely selfish purpose of maintaining his own existence. That he should be a vegetarian does not alter the case. There is a plant life as well as animal life, and it is only a narrow and prejudiced mind that would dare pronounce the one inferior in nobility to the other. The vegetarian who objects to bloodshed perforce kills a cabbage for his dinner ; for a cabbage is a living thing, subject like ourselves to the great law of birth and death, and accounted inferior by us only because its life is planned upon a different scale from ours. As a living entity, a cabbage is as far beyond our power of comprehension or imitative manufacture as a bullock or a sheep. It does in its way what no mere animal could do ; it draws its nourishment from the soil—that is, from the constituents of the mineral kingdom, which it transforms into substances capable of being assimilated by animal life. We may prey upon the animal, or, like the animal, we may go direct to the vegetable kingdom for our food ; but without the daily destruction of life our existence is impossible.

‘Death by Starvation’

Probably the bird slaughtered by man for its plumage meets with a kindlier fate than would be in store for it if left to Nature’s care. What is the common form of natural death among animals? Science and observation furnish no answer except the ghastly one, ‘Death by starvation.’ So sympathetic an observer as Mr. C. J. Cornish admits this. ‘The inquiries of veterinary science show that in the case of some ruminant animals this is the logical end of physical changes in the mouth and teeth. For the carnivora loss of strength means loss of the power to obtain food, which is sought first in the form of feebler or unusual prey, and in the end cannot be procured. In Devonshire I have seen birds in a hard winter dying in scores before our eyes—too weak to eat the food offered them.’ Truly, this question of cruelty opens up a difficult problem—for the humanitarian. On the ground professedly taken up by our tender-hearted leagues of one sort and another, the agitation against the slaughter of animals as cruel is absolutely futile. It may safely be affirmed that every bird they save from the fowler they condemn to a more lingering death by starvation. Here is a new defence for the sportsman, too, if one were needed. If they will attempt to regulate the work of the universe and revise the Creator’s laws, the most urgent question for the humanitarians to concern themselves with is whether a slow death by starvation or a quick death by the weapons of man, or their other natural enemies, is the more desirable fate for fur or feather. There seems to be no escaping these alternatives. No wild thing, so to speak, dies in its bed surrounded by sorrowing relatives and provided with all its comforts. Perhaps even these boons are of less moment in the circumstances than we imagine.

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Yes ; humanity is strangely purblind, especially in this question of cruelty. We are pained at the discovery that the lower animals die mostly a violent death of some kind. But is the human race itself in better case ? A good many of us, it is true, die in our beds, but how many from the decay of nature, properly so called ? Not a hundredth, not a thousandth part. Every germ-disease is an attack upon us by natural foes which escape remark only because they are unseen by the naked eye, and it cannot be said that their depredations are less cruel than those of the human hunter or sportsman. People are shocked to learn that a flock of the vicious Kea parrots of New Zealand will kill as many as two hundred sheep in a night ; but who thinks of the thousands of human beings done to death in England every day by natural foes ? If the germ-diseases were eradicated from the human race the death-rate would diminish enormously, and the average length of human life would leap up in proportion. Natural foes slay human beings every day—nay, every hour of the day—by thousands and tens of thousands. The constitutional or congenital diseases would no doubt account for a considerable proportion of the death-rate ; but if we were only to die from those or from old age the world would be a very different place. Yet, if I mistake not, many of the people most closely identified with ‘humanitarianism’ are staunch opponents of all experiments made in vivisection with a view to the combating of disease and suffering in the human race. What a strange contradiction of motives, to be sure ! And how does vivisection itself appear in the light of the facts above stated with reference to the common lot of wild animals ? Is vivisection (performed, be it remembered, in the interests

Vivisection

of science), so much worse than 'death by starvation,' even from the victim's point of view ?

I should define cruelty as a conception inspired by the idea of suffering in animals constituted more or less like ourselves. If the nerves of the animals exciting our interest convey different impressions from our own, our sympathy may be to a great extent misplaced—and I believe a good deal of our sympathy is misplaced—but that is neither here nor there ; the mental effect remains, giving rise to our conception of cruelty. Unfortunately for the humanitarian, he selects as objects of his sympathy only such animals as are similarly constituted to himself. The ill-treatment of a dog or a horse touches him keenly. Birds, by somewhat of an effort, have been brought within the pale. Fish are hardly credited with feelings, and the whole insect world is banned. Rats and mice, delicately constituted animals whose only fault is that their interests conflict with ours, receive as little consideration as fleas or cockroaches. I dare say the Secretary of the Humanitarian League, besides using the latest insecticide to promote his personal comfort, would not hesitate to set traps for rats and mice, or lay down poison that would kill these animals by the score. Yet in point of sensibility and intelligence rats and mice stand high in the scale.

For the undeniable partiality he exhibits in his relations with other forms of life, I am not blaming the humanitarian. It is entirely natural. I have felt myself how one may be the victim of the sentiment that sways him, even in its least defensible form. I remember being admitted to the demonstrations of a popular anatomist at University College, the subject of the day's experiment being the localisation of the functions of the brain of the monkey.

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I found the professor in his study preparing for the afternoon class. He had a chloroformed monkey in his hands of the Macaque species. Having carefully skinned one side of its head, he began chipping away its skull with a pair of pincers. The chips of bone flew all over the room, and one of them nearly caught me in the eye. My heart bled for the poor monkey, which, nevertheless, I knew to be wholly insensible. After the action of its brain under the electric stimulus had been exhibited to the students, the animal was brought back into the study to be despatched. It was still under chloroform. It looked like a tiny, wizened old man; and its poor little face was so pale, so ill, so human, that I could not repress a shudder at the sight. 'Stab it,' said the professor in his matter-of-fact way to an assistant; and as the latter took a dagger and plunged it into the monkey's heart, I felt for the moment as if murder were being done. Why? Because of the wretched animal's human likeness. That, and that only! Had the professor's assistant killed a flea or a fly to order, my withers would have been unwrung.

These examples serve to show how ill-regulated a sentiment, to say the least of it, is the humanitarianism commonly professed. To an unsuspected extent, it may very well be pure self-deception. We do not know that death, even when it takes the form of the slaughter of birds, seals, or other sentient things in the interests of fashion, is ever the terrible crisis in the animal economy that we picture it. It is unexpected, and as a rule, no doubt, too swift to be painful.

CHAPTER VI

Bull-fighting *v.* Fox-hunting—Vivisection—How it feels to Die—Experiences at Executions—‘Half-hanged Smith’—Can a Severed Head feel?—Painlessness of Death.

A FAVOURITE aversion of the sensitive in this country is fox-hunting. But, as an old proverb rightly puts it, we have never had the fox’s account of the hunt. We are not without some indication of his feelings, nevertheless, and it is not favourable to the humanitarian view. The effort to escape the hounds brings all the fox’s faculties, physical and mental, into healthy play, than which there can be nothing of a more pleasurable character. Of terror he probably knows nothing. When hard pressed by the hounds, a fox has been seen to stop and jump round playfully after his brush before starting off again on a straight run in front of his pursuers. At the worst, when caught, it is not likely that his sufferings are greater than those of Livingstone in the jaws of the lion. He is too excited by his run to feel anything, just as the soldier in the heat of battle is insensible to his wound.

It has been my lot to see more of bull-fighting in Spain than of fox-hunting in England. At the mention of a bull-fight, the English fox-hunter himself looks aghast. After a close examination of bull-fighting under its normal conditions, I am convinced that the amount of suffering it involves is as small as if the animals concerned

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were allowed to die a natural death. The bull himself, to begin with, has a splendid time. For four years he is reared in the lap of luxury—a circumstance which ought to be taken into account in casting up his profit and loss. In the height of his health and strength, when he is absolutely spoiling for a fight—for this breed of bull is terribly pugnacious—he is suddenly introduced into a ring where there is everything that he desires—enemies *galore*, carrying the most hateful of all objects, red cloaks. For a moment the bull is bewildered by the audacity of his foes; he can hardly believe his eyes. But presently he recovers his aplomb and attacks them with all his might. He keeps on attacking them till he is tired. They always elude him, or, as every now and then a toreador's life is sacrificed, let us say nearly always. If the bull liked at this stage to give up he could, and he would be driven out of the ring with obloquy. Some bulls do funk and have their lives spared for the time; they afterwards meet the common fate of their kind in the slaughterhouse. But, as a rule, the bull's pugnacity sustains him to the last. Does he feel the pricks of the picador or the banderillero? It is hard to believe it. His blood is then up, and notoriously men under the excitement of battle do not feel superficial wounds. At last comes the fatal thrust from the matador, and the analogous experience of the human being does not, I believe, involve anything like suffering. The usual look of the bull when the sword is dexterously thrust up to its hilt in his shoulder is one of surprise. He falls back and stands still for a moment. Next he walks forward aimlessly with a somewhat unsteady step. His hind-legs fail him first. Then he lies down altogether; whereupon an attendant walks up, and

Bull-fighting

with a blow of a sharp instrument in the nape of the neck despatches him.

So much for the bull. Perhaps in an even greater degree the horses claim attention, seeing that the usual allowance of those is two to every bull. They have none of the agonies of anticipation. They never see the bull, because they are carefully blindfolded of one eye, the eye that is next to the enemy. As soon as they are struck they sink down from weakness, and are then despatched by an attendant in the same way as the bull. In less than half a minute from the moment of receiving the fatal wound horses and bull are dead. I cannot imagine that in either case the suffering is more than would occur in the event of natural death—*i.e.* it is practically *nil*. If the horses were not saved up for this fate, they would assuredly meet with a worse in the knacker's yard. The bull dies amid all the excitement of battle that he so dearly loves. His death is the death of the hero, which we never deplore. Compare all this with grouse-shooting. The birds that are shot outright suffer nothing; but how many of them escape winged or wounded, to linger on for days in a state of disablement? I do not say that bull-fighting is right, or that grouse-shooting is right. All I venture to affirm is that as 'sport' they stand or fall together. With the smug insularism that affirms *our* sport to be right and other people's sport wrong I have no patience.

The most plausible objection to bull-fighting is its possible effect upon the spectators, who are not only men but largely women, with a considerable sprinkling of children; though in this connection let us not forget that fox-hunting has its female votaries, who like to be in at the death if they can, while the grouse and pheasant bags

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are handled and admired by women on the return of the heroes from the moors. Unquestionably, the predominant feeling at a bull-fight is the terrible risk the men run. The mere bloodshed does not impress one more painfully than the routine work of an English slaughterhouse. The overthrow of a horse and his rider, with the rider practically under the bull's feet—that is a thrilling moment! Still more thrilling is it when the helpless picador is being raised to his feet by two or three attendants, and when the bull at the other side of the ring, catching sight of the little group of men, lowers his horns and makes for them at full gallop. There is not a second to lose: for the ring is very little larger than an ordinary circus. In that second you get such a sensation, or series of sensations, as I suppose nothing but a charge of cavalry on a battlefield could yield. No! I do not think the thirst for blood counts for much with the spectators. They experience rather the sort of emotion with which the English public would look on at a particularly difficult piece of trapeze work without a safety-net for the performers to drop into.

On the question of demoralisation I have just this to add: that while bull-fighting is the national sport, shared in by men and women alike, I have invariably found the Spaniards a gentle, courteous, chivalrous people. They are particularly kind to their animals. The patience with which they drive their docile beeves would be a useful lesson to a London coster. For evidence of demoralisation, as the result of generations of bull-fighting, you will look in vain in Spain. On the contrary, the people lead a happier, brighter, better life than we in England, where the stress of competition, the insane rush after wealth, the

Cruelty

fierceness of the struggle for life, is a real and terrible demoralisation.

A propos of cruelty one may ask, 'What of the angler? John Bright was a great salmon-angler and, above all, professedly a man of peace. No one lamented more than he the cruelties practised upon the lower animals—by other people. If he had heard that the Spaniards were in the habit of forcing a steel hook down a bull's throat until it got a good grip of the entrails, and that they then for their pleasure pulled the wretched animal up and down by this hook until it sank down from exhaustion, how that fine sonorous voice of his would have been lifted up in accents of horror and indignation! Yet this was John Bright's method with the salmon, which is a more intelligent and, therefore, probably a more sensitive, creature than the bull. It is also the method of a good many other highly respected and God-fearing men, who would hold up their hands in holy horror at a bull-fight. Oh the pharisaism of it!

It may be thought ungracious thus to hold a brief for what is termed cruelty. But it is surely needless for us to remain under a delusion on the subject, if delusion there be; and it seems to me impossible to maintain the cruelty thesis, on the basis of current humanitarianism, without laying oneself open to the charge of gross inconsistency on the one hand, and a rather grotesque criticism of the ways of Providence on the other. To the sensitive humanitarian it ought to be some consolation to discover that Nature is kinder in her methods than he had imagined. After all, cruelty at the worst means death, and death is the inevitable concomitant of life. No egret killed for the sake of its plumes, no fox torn to

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pieces by hounds, no bull pierced to the heart by a skilful matador, has inflicted upon it a fate which it would, if left to itself, escape. The victim of fashion or sport is robbed of some portion of what may be called its natural life, but life itself is of such small account in Nature's estimation that daily she sacrifices millions of lives in the germ; at which phenomenon, strange to say, the humanitarian, with his proclivity for straining at gnats and swallowing camels, looks on unmoved. It is the minutest fringe of the great mystery that he concerns himself with. The adornment of a fashionable hat with a bird's plumage is the satisfaction of an instinct, and throughout animated nature the satisfaction of an instinct on the part of one created thing is recognised as a valid death-warrant to another, or countless others. In fact, premature death, with what is supposed to be its concomitant, suffering, prevails in the world to such an extent that all the efforts of man probably could not augment or diminish the sum of it by a hairbreadth. The humanitarian, who himself lives only at the cost of the daily death of countless numbers of living organisms—for there are those that he drinks and breathes, as well as those that he eats—ought, if he were true to his principles, to abstain from nourishing his body at all, and fade out of a world that he believes to be a mistake. In accordance with what code of ethics does he pronounce immoral this or that portion of a scheme of creation of which he does not know the alphabet?

It is sad to see either human being or animal struggling for a petty existence, but once death has supervened, it must be better so. Death enters so inevitably into the scheme of Nature that we must be wrong to dread it, or rather, in dreading it we must merely be the victims of

Death and Suffering

that instinctive love of life which keeps the animal kingdom going. Death ought not to be, and probably is not, more terrible than birth.

A fascinating subject of speculation is the sensation one experiences when death in any shape is approaching, or actually taking place. It is a sensation in which naturally all of us are interested, since it must some day be our own. The evidence procurable on the subject is meagre, for once in the jaws of death there are few who return to tell the tale. But an examination of recorded experiences of different kinds seems to afford ground for believing that actual dissolution is more or less painless, even when brought about by violence, the suffering we associate with it arising from the effort of recovery rather than the gradual ebbing of the vital forces. The terror of death belongs not to the dying, but to the strong and well. When the rider on the pale horse really comes in sight, one is ready to welcome him as a friend. There are people who have gone through the whole process of a violent death, say hanging or drowning, being restored to life after they had lost consciousness, and when it would not have been possible for them to feel any more had death supervened ; but there is never anything dreadful or deterrent in their accounts of the event. The mind in its last conscious moments seems to be in a hazy, vague, dreamy, and rather pleasurable state, from which it glides into the unconsciousness that precedes the end.

After all, sensation—nay, thought itself—is only a question of molecular action ; and a lowering of the vital forces, from any cause, is attended by a loss of nerve-sensibility, which means simply a loss of feeling. Much of the suffering that a dying person is thought to endure is read

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into his case by the bystanders, who are themselves in health, and whose nerves are keenly sympathetic. They think how terrible it must be to leave the world. That, however, is seldom the feeling of the patient.

In the ordinary process of going to sleep, I believe we all practically feel what it is to die. In both cases we lose consciousness in the same way—namely, by a stoppage or suspension of the normal flow of blood to the brain. And whenever we become unconscious from any cause, we are, to all intents and purposes, dead; we might pass from unconsciousness into death, and from death into dissolution, and we should not by any physiological possibility become aware of the fact. A profound sleep is, therefore, a temporary death to the Ego. Upon those who contend that mind survives death—I say nothing of the spiritual element—a heavy *onus probandi* consequently is laid. After consciousness ceases, which it usually does some little time before the heart stops beating, it is not easy to draw the line anywhere in the process of dying, and say, ‘Here consciousness revives, never to cease again.’ All the more difficult is this, that we know consciousness to be merely an attribute of that mechanism, the brain, ceasing when this is subjected to even a slight derangement, to say nothing of destruction.

Among the ‘documents’ directly bearing upon this question of dying there are few of more interest than the last scribbled words of the chief figure in a once sensational ‘Brompton mystery.’ This was a medical man, one Dr. Heron, who set about suicide in a most deliberate fashion. He appears to have been engaged three hours attempting to poison himself with morphia, but failed because his system was too much inured to the drug. At length,

Feeling of the Dying

impatient at the slowness of this method, he turned over and cut his throat.

Dr. Heron began by taking a dose of morphia calculated to kill three or four ordinary people, and at intervals he appears to have increased it to triple the amount—that is to say, about eighteen grains in all—still without the desired result. Yet there is no doubt that during his three hours' experimenting he virtually died again and again. Thinking that each dose would be fatal, he indited several premature good-byes; and it was with evident astonishment that he woke up from his stupors from time to time to find himself still alive. More than once he appears to have felt himself lapsing into a dazed and insensible condition, which he mistook for death.

But while he must have experienced under morphia all the sensations of dying, as to pain he has not a word to say. On the contrary, the last lines traced by his faltering hand were that he felt 'most beautifully warm and comfortable, as people do after morphia.' Of his sensations under his second and more effectual mode of suicide he left no record. It was too quick for that; but the medical evidence at the inquest showed that the brain, while perfectly sound, was completely drained of blood, which is a near approach to the condition it would have been in in the midst of a dreamless sleep.

The form of death that overtakes the inmates of a burning building is commonly thought to be one of the most terrible. So far as anticipation is concerned it may be; but the end comes by asphyxiation, either from smoke or from the exhaustion of the oxygen of the surrounding atmosphere; and asphyxiation ought to be practically painless. Many people are rescued in an un-

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conscious state from burning buildings by firemen and policemen. Asphyxiation has visited them as they slept. With them the fire fiend has done his worst, for if help had not come they would have glided from unconsciousness into death, and been none the wiser. Yet they have suffered little—perhaps not at all. Nevertheless, had their charred remains been recovered from the ruins, the sympathetic observer would have imagined, quite erroneously, that they had experienced unspeakable torture. The unconsciousness induced by fire-damp in mines is also known to be painless.

At executions there is no evidence of any suffering on the part of the ‘patient’ beyond what one experiences at many junctures in life—such as the receipt of a piece of bad news, for example. There is possibly, in extreme cases, a feeling of dread amounting to nausea experienced on the scaffold; but certainly nothing more acute.

As a rule, the doomed man mounting the gallows or approaching the guillotine looks dazed and bewildered, as if he could not believe that the supreme moment had come. He obeys the instructions of the executioner mechanically. To him the scene is entirely theatrical or dreamlike, as indeed it is to the spectator, who has sometimes to pinch himself to know that he is awake. And curiously enough, the surroundings of an execution, whether in the solitude of the quadrangle of an English prison, or amid the swaying mob at the Place de la Roquette, are well calculated to foster this illusion of unreality. The whole thing wears an air of *mise-en-scène*, even the instrument of death looking like something put together by the property man, and ludicrously inadequate to its purpose. Whatever may be the drawbacks of being

Hanging

hanged or guillotined or electrocuted, they belong clearly to the period of anticipation, and hardly at all to the fatal moment itself.

For the adoption of the long drop at executions we are accustomed to take a great deal of credit to ourselves ; but the difference between that and the short drop must be chiefly a sentimental one. The one dislocates the neck at once, while the other usually causes death by strangulation. This is a slower process, no doubt, but the real efficiency of the two methods depends upon the production of unconsciousness ; and there is every reason to believe that this supervenes as speedily in the one case as in the other. The moment the rope tightens on the neck, the circulation of blood in the brain is checked, and there is an end of consciousness as surely as if the spinal column were snapped in two. People who, being partly hanged, have been cut down in time to be restored to society, invariably speak of an almost instantaneous loss of consciousness.

In the year 1705 one John Smith, convicted of robbery, was sentenced to be hanged at Tyburn, and hanged he was after a fashion. Here let me quote the ancient chronicler, whose account in the *Newgate Calendar* is sufficiently quaint and curious :—

‘Smith, having been carried to Tyburn, where he performed his devotions, was turned off in the usual way, but when he had hung near fifteen minutes, the people present cried out, “A reprieve.” Hereupon the malefactor was cut down, and being conveyed to a house in the neighbourhood, he soon recovered, in consequence of bleeding and other proper applications. When he had perfectly resumed his senses he was asked what were his feelings at the time of execution, to which he repeatedly replied in substance as follows :—“That when he swung off the cart, he was sensible of pain, occasioned by the weight of his body, and felt his spirits in a strange commotion violently pressing upwards, and that these

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having forced their way to his head, he, as it were, saw a great blaze of glaring light which seemed to go out at his eyes with a flash, and then he lost all sense of pain. That, after he was cut down and began to come to himself, the blood and spirits forcing themselves into their former channels put him by a sort of pricking or shooting to such intolerable pain that he could have wished those hanged who cut him down.”

‘Half-hanged Smith,’ as he was called, got into trouble once or twice afterwards, but always escaped the hangman’s rope. What became of him finally the ancient chronicler does not know; but in the words of this authority, ‘Christian charity inclines to hope that he made a proper use of the singular dispensation of Providence evidenced in his own person.’

The purely scientific interest of the case is sufficient to rescue it from oblivion. According to modern ideas, hanging, as practised at Tyburn, ought to have been a terrible fate, the malefactor, with the rope round his neck, being placed in a cart, which was then drawn away from him, leaving him to swing. Yet John Smith appears to have found the process of strangulation tolerable enough up to the point of losing consciousness. What would have happened had the reprieve failed to arrive in time? Would he have gone on being unconscious endlessly, or would he, at the point of death, as many pretend, have opened his eyes upon a new world? Mystery, mystery, mystery! Scientifically speaking, the flash of light is what I should have expected from a sudden violence being done to the optic nerve. I should equally have anticipated a crashing sound from the disturbance set up in the auditory centre of the brain. Of that, however, John Smith does not speak. Nor does he allude to any derangement of taste and smell, also theoretically possible.

The Guillotine

On the analogy of the flash of light, these things too ought to have been. But perhaps John Smith was not observant, and unfortunately there is no prospect that any 'patient' of the modern hangman's will, after the long drop, be more communicative.

Among his many remarkable exploits, the Belgian painter Wiertz, who was a compound of madness and genius, once endeavoured to get at the sensations of a severed head by an ingenious application of hypnotism. A few minutes before an execution he placed himself in the immediate neighbourhood of the guillotine, but concealed from public view. There he was thrown into a mesmeric sleep, and it was hypnotically suggested to him that he should identify himself with the criminal, follow all his sensations, and express these in words as best he could from the moment the head was severed till death supervened. At the appointed moment the knife fell, and the convict's head rolled into its receptacle. 'What do you feel? What do you see?' asked the mesmerist of his subject. Wiertz rolled convulsively, and groaned out the words, 'A flash of fire! Heavens! It thinks! it sees!' 'What thinks?' was the next question. 'The head,' replied Wiertz; 'it suffers horribly, but it does not quite know what has happened. It is feeling for its body, and wonders what has become of it. . . . It is crushed by some terrible weight from which it seeks to free itself. But it has no hands to use. O horror! It realises at last that it is a severed head, that the blood is gushing in torrents from its neck.' And so on, the rhapsody of the hypnotised painter lasting for a couple of minutes in this strain before he sank into the deep sleep which was supposed to denote the head's loss of consciousness.

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Wiertz's hypnotic ravings were accepted some thirty years ago as serious proof of a survival of consciousness in the severed head, corroborating, as they did, many current stories of heads that had looked reproachfully at their executioner, that had blushed, or that had otherwise shown signs of intelligence. But at all such tales modern science smiles. Thought-transference or sensation-transference of the kind described is impossible. The hypnotic patient in Wiertz's position could tell nothing more than he himself previously knew or imagined. Besides, with regard to the action of the guillotine, there is nothing more certain in physiology than that the shock of the knife and the immediate drain of blood from the brain produce immediate unconsciousness. It is very doubtful if the patient feels even as much as old Dr. Guillotin, the inventor of the instrument, thought he might, namely, a certain 'freshness' about the neck at the knife's first contact.

More recently the problem as to whether a severed head retains consciousness for a few seconds was raised in the case of the Abbé Bruneau, executed in France for murder. It was arranged between Bruneau and his advocate Dominique that the former should, by some movement of the eyes or lips after the knife had descended, indicate the survival of consciousness. Almost before the head had fallen into the basket of the guillotine, Dominique lifted it by the hair, saying, 'Answer, answer quick.' 'As I uttered these words,' says the *avocat*, 'the eyelid of the left eye dropped spasmodically, and was raised again. I hesitated a second, and repeated my words; but there was no response, only a quivering of the eyelid, after which the features became set, and the

The Severed Head

lines of the face more marked, and within six seconds from the fall of the knife the head was unmistakably dead. My effort,' adds Dominique, 'to solve the mystery of the duration of life after decapitation failed.'

A little anatomical knowledge on the part of the man of law would have saved him from this disappointment. The nerves of the face, equally with those of the body, pass through the great central collecting station called the *medulla oblongata*, situated at the top of the spinal column, and just inside the skull. Now, the knife of the guillotine in its descent cuts obliquely through the base of the skull as a general rule, and therefore paralyses, if it does not destroy, the nerves of facial expression at their point of origin. No doubt, if the culprit thrust his head as far through the lunette of the guillotine as possible, the neck proper would be severed, and the facial nerve, together with its connections in the *medulla oblongata*, remain intact; but the instinct of the doomed man is to pull his head back, which he can do owing to the lunette not fitting closely, and to lift up his face, so that the knife cuts through the base of the skull; and, apart from the question of severance, the shock to the *medulla oblongata* must be such as to paralyse instantaneously not only the facial nerve but all the head nerves without exception, thus cutting off communication between the eyes or the lips and the seat of thought in the brain. It is said that Marie Antoinette's face blushed for shame as her severed head was held up by the executioner. Unfortunately for this tradition, blushing is a vaso-motor phenomenon entirely, as may be seen by common experiment in cutting the auricular nerve of a rabbit, which immediately flushes with blood (in fact, blushes) from the removal of the tonic

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vaso-constrictor influence carried by the vaso-motor nerve in its sheath. Ordinary facial blushing is, of course, the temporary inhibition of those same vaso-constrictor influences by stimuli sent down from the higher centres. So, if Marie Antoinette's face did blush after decapitation, it must have been from other causes than those averred by her champions.

To the question, then, whether a severed head can give any sign of intelligence, one may answer emphatically No! There can be no muscular sign. That is certain. If there is a quiver of the eyelids, it is a purely local effect uninspired by the brain, with which all nervous communication is cut off. I do not deny that consciousness may survive for a moment, but it must be lost before the head touches the sawdust. The immediate drain of blood from the brain would have that effect, to say nothing of the nervous shock, which is probably instantaneous in its action. In such a case the duration of consciousness must be shorter than when a man is shot or stabbed through the heart, but not so short as when a bullet traverses his brain.

What happens in the case of decapitation is probably this: The head feels the contact of the knife as a crash of sound and a flash of light. I do not think that it can have any sense of falling, because that would imply the activity of certain nerve-centres which must by that time be paralysed. There would probably be no coherent thought even for a moment—none certainly to be compared with that which flashes through the mind of the man who is being hanged during his fall through the trap-door. Considering what a volume of thought may pass through our minds within a very short space in our

Torture

dreams, the hanged man may, between the fall of the trap and the tug of the rope, experience a very complex set of sensations and ideas. Once it comes, however, the breaking of the neck by the rope must be very like the severance of the spinal column by the knife—that is to say, there will be a crash, a flash, and then, sooner than it takes to write, darkness.

The really humane mode of inflicting the death punishment is that which at once deprives the victim of consciousness, and the various systems in vogue among European nations seem very much alike in that respect. At old-time and barbarous methods of execution one may draw the line. Slow pressing to death, drawing and quartering by means of horses, and burning, were probably cruel; and in this connection it is curious to reflect that, as recently as 1783, a woman was burnt at Ipswich for murdering her husband. They have punishments in China which, as we have seen, are as full of torture as anything human malignity could conceive. And yet I do not know that the torturer is not defeated at the very moment when he flatters himself he is at the height of success: for, like gas and water pipes, the nerves, which are the vehicles of all pleasure and pain, have only a certain carrying capacity which is easily attained, and thereafter energy of any kind is as much lost upon us as those vibrations of the air which lie beyond the shrillest note in music. A bright light blinds us, and a loud noise deafens us. As soon as a certain acuteness of pain is attained, Nature is prompt in applying her anæsthetic—unconsciousness.

On the whole subject of cruelty or suffering, whether in the human species or among the lower animals, I believe

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we are very liable to err. Of course we cannot with certainty say how animals feel under all circumstances. But we have tolerably certain proof of the delusions to which we are subject in the recorded experiences of our own species. Dr. Livingstone, seized by a lion, 'fell into a state of dreaminess in which there was no sense of pain or terror'; and Whympers fell down a slope of the Matterhorn, and lost consciousness on the way, without suffering. A short time ago a London newspaper invited contributions as to the experiences of persons who had been at the point of death from illness or accident, and the general testimony was that death presented itself in a more or less agreeable shape, even in the case of machinery accidents. In short, when death comes, I imagine, it is always welcome—to the dying.

CHAPTER VII

The Cleavage of Sex—Intellectual Differences between Men and Women—Woman's Place in Society—Learned Spinsterhood—'Cherchez la Femme'—Education *v.* Good Looks—The Marriage Market—Divorce—The Religious Objection—Selection of Partners in Wedlock—Can the Race be Improved?—Standards of Morality between the Sexes.

MEN on the average have heavier brains than women, and the fact is sometimes adduced as an argument against the equality of the sexes. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that the grey matter of the brain has more to do than assist in the production of intellect. It is the source of all the muscular energy of our bodies; it has to carry on all the digestive and nutritive processes; to work the heart and the circulation. In fact, there is no function whatever, physical or mental, in which the nerve-cells of the brain or spinal column are not concerned. It naturally follows, then, that with his larger physical bulk man requires the expenditure of a greater amount of nerve-force than woman, without reference to intellect at all.

It appears that man's brain-weight, on the average, is to woman's as 100 to 90. As to his body-weight, compared with woman's, there is a difference of opinion. Some authorities give it as 100 to 83, while one chivalrous French physiologist estimates the active organic mass of woman's body compared with man's as at most 70 to 100,

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which would give an enormous balance of intellectual energy on the woman's side.

The differences that do exist between the sexes in point of weight and measurement are certainly very deep-seated. Within historic time—that is, as far back as the Egyptian mummy will take us—the physical and presumably the mental differences of men and women have been pretty much the same as to-day. Among all races, the skull and other measurements remain relatively unchanged. The footrule method of comparing the sexes, however, is really inadequate and misleading. The size of a brain matters much less than its composition, and into intellect bodily influences enter far more largely than is commonly supposed. For example, the abdominal area is relatively larger in women than in men, and if it plays an important part in our emotional conditions, it ought to be reckoned with in any attempt to compare the intellectual powers of the two sexes.

Be the causes of the intellectual differences of men and women what they may, it is certain that such differences exist in a very marked degree. The whole psychic life of women is different from that of men; they have a world of emotions of their own. Whereas men, as has been remarked, move from month to month along a pretty straight line, women are forever on the slope of a curve, in a state of exaltation or depression; their impressionability, their suggestibility, their powers of self-control, constantly vary; they are more liable at one period than another to sudden caprice, depression, outbursts of temper or self-confession, and fits of jealousy. Mentally and emotionally they are as unlike men as two creatures of similar mould could be, and it does not seem as if any

Sex

schemes of political and educational equalisation could ever succeed in placing them upon the same level.

The physiological considerations above cited prepare us for a due appreciation of the 'advanced' arguments for equality put forward in speeches, articles, and even plays. Sex represents a deep line of cleavage in the human species, and I do not know that more than a very few instances can be cited of the gulf being bridged over—of women usurping the place of men in society with success. For untold generations, woman's sphere has been the domestic, as man's has been the outdoor, the fighting, the bread-winning; and this difference of function has ingrained itself in every bone and fibre and nerve-cell of our systems. Many of the modern occupations of women—shopkeeping, waiting in bars and restaurants, dressmaking, tailoring, manufacturing—are only extensions of the domestic, and are congenial enough. In pure literature and art, also, female influence must necessarily weigh, and I see no reason why women need be unsexed in order to write or to paint, to act or to practise music; this is a sort of common ground for the sexes. But in the administrative field, which embraces politics and all the wider forms of commercial enterprise, women are out of place. They are governed far more by sentiment than by reason, and are consequently the victims of first impressions, of prejudices, of spite, of overweening confidence, to a greater extent than men.

The cleavage of sex existing, no successful adaptation of women's faculties to the conditions of male life appears to be feasible within our time. Marriage and domesticity must remain for the present woman's chief hope and aim, and the vagaries of the female agitators seem to have the

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effect of scaring men away from, rather than attracting them to, the hymeneal altar.

From the admission of women to the general walks of public life, there would arise, I believe, a generally unsuspected danger: that of the warping influence of sex. Of this sex-influence we have already some experience in breach of promise cases.

A male jury is always disposed to favour the female plaintiff, especially if she happens to be young and attractive, and I doubt whether the judge can safely be acquitted of the same weakness. Among male jurymen, and probably judges too, there is a disposition to punish any helpless male defendant who seems to be able to boast of an undue amount of conquest. For one thing, they are mostly married men, 'out of the hunt' themselves, and therefore peculiarly open to be swayed by envy and vain regrets. For another, they are mostly fathers of marriageable daughters, and therefore bound to make it disagreeable for any possible disturber of their domestic peace.

On the same principle—*i.e.* sex-influence—I believe that a jury of women would be wondrous kind to the male defendant, and at the same time spiteful and vixenish towards the plaintiff of their own sex. Then, indeed, there would be a very good chance of a reversal of the present position of plaintiffs and defendants in breach of promise cases. No man at present dare bring forward his blighted affections for assessment by his fellow-man. At the best he gets a farthing damages, and usually is laughed out of court. With a jury of ladies sitting in judgment upon their erring sister—for to that complexion the case would come—he might certainly hope for better things.

Sex-Prejudice

Women are admittedly the severest judges of their own sex. This Schopenhauer observed, though he attributed it, as I believe, to the wrong motive. He argued that women judged severely the weaker vessels of their class—the poor things who loved without also making sure that they did not lose—because they held confab with the enemy, and because they failed in discipline by not closing up the ranks against him! Whereas, there is probably not a leader or a private in the petticoat camp who is not prepared to turn traitress to the common cause at the first opportunity.

I am not blaming one party or the other. In this matter it is nature that has to be reckoned with, and the law is to blame for throwing itself athwart her path. Between man and man—or, for the matter of that, woman and woman—a male jury will hold the balance fairly; but where sex-influence intervenes, as it inevitably does in a breach of promise action, the course of justice, I believe, is perverted. With a male jury, the presumption is against the male defendant or male plaintiff, just as with a female jury the case would be reversed. It is to sex-influence in the jury-box, and likewise, if I may venture to say so, on the bench, that we owe the introduction of sentiment, as distinct from considerations of fact, into contracts relating to matrimony. In no other class of contract does the question of sentiment arise. What jury would hold a householder responsible for a sack of potatoes because he was supposed in a moment of expansion to have squeezed the hand of his greengrocer? They would require definite proof that the goods had been ordered; and a claim for damages for non-fulfilment of the contract would be judged by the same standard.

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By admitting sentiment as a factor in the breach of promise action, it is well to bear in mind that we undermine the theory of English courtship, upon which we are accustomed to plume ourselves as a practice which those wicked and suspicious French people do not understand, or are not moral enough to indulge in. Courtship is nothing if not a probationary period; and if it is probationary, it follows that one of the parties to it, finding the other not to his or her liking, ought to be at liberty to cry off. Too often, however, courtship—especially if accompanied, as naturally it should be, by some vague talk of marriage—is held by biassed judges and vindictive juries to constitute a ground of ‘action for breach.’ Women complain that young men show less and less disposition to commit themselves to matrimony—that the marrying age for the present generation has been rising until already it is well beyond thirty, whereas their fathers took the plunge a good ten years earlier. But may not the terrors of the modern ‘action for breach’ be helping to keep the sexes at a cold and calculating distance.

The point is worth considering. The girls of to-day, I doubt not, are just as fascinating as ever their mothers were, but before they have a chance of infatuating their contemporaries to the same degree they must enjoy those facilities for social intercourse which are now labelled by judges and juries as ‘dangerous.’ If courtship were less restricted than it is, the eligible young men would probably show a more coming-on disposition than they do. He is really a bold youth who nowadays ventures to show any particular attention to the daughter of a managing mother; he is obliged to keep in view the fact that if he should change his mind he runs the risk of

Learned Women

being cast in damages by a sentimental jury. Let us revert, if we can, to the conception of a contract to marry as being like any other contract, the breach of which carries damages only to the extent to which material injury to the plaintiff can be proved. That would be an advantage, I believe, to all concerned. And if the system could be worked by mixed juries it would have all the greater chance of fairness.

Learning itself would seem to be an acquisition of doubtful value to women. In certain of its aspects the modern matrimonial market may be open to criticism, but few will be found to deny that marriage is the proper career for healthily constituted men and women. Now, it is found in practice that the girl graduate's chances of matrimony are smaller than those of almost any other class of girl in the community—certainly far below those of the comparatively illiterate young person who serves in bars and restaurants. As a rule, the Girton or Newnham young lady does not make much of her learning. Failing to obtain a good scholastic appointment (for such prizes are few), she drifts into ordinary governessing, or returns home to live with her parents. The last thing she does is to marry, as the statistics show.

Is it fastidiousness that determines the learned lady to settle down into spinsterhood? Does she know so much that she is unable to take men at their own valuation? Does she abstain from wifedom and motherhood because in her wisdom she deems abstention the better part? Or, frankly speaking, does she marry less than the average woman because she is not so often asked to? I am afraid there is more in this last hypothesis than the advocates of the higher education of women reckon. The average man

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would a good deal rather make love to a pretty girl who could not be trusted to spell than to a plain one who held a Cambridge certificate. He would prefer amiability to a knowledge of mathematics. And his choice would probably be justified, not only in its immediate, but also in its remoter, results, supposing his half-hour's flirtation led up to matrimony. Nothing is more certain than this: that the only sexual relationships to be called happy are those in which the woman frankly owns to herself that her part as regards contact with the outer world is a secondary one. She may counsel, but she must not command. The happy wife is she who looks up to her husband. The learned lady must be under a strong temptation to think her husband a fool, except in the rare event of her marrying a Senior Wrangler, when probably new and still undesirable complications would arise. All of which the average man (and it is he who makes up the Registrar-General's vital statistics) instinctively knows.

The question remains whether, in the existing order of society, women labour under any practical injustice, political or otherwise. Whenever a political or social scandal occupies public attention, some one is sure to whisper, *Cherchez la femme*. It is excellent advice, for woman is inextricably bound up with all the interests of life, great and small. Under all governments, and every society, the vital constant is the *ewig Weibliche*, *l'éternel féminin*, or vulgarly in English, 'the petticoat.'

Nor is it on the seamy side of life alone that one need look for the exercise of female influence. It is all-pervading. Very often it is the unseen connecting-link between a cause and an effect that appear to be entirely dissociated. In cases where female influence produces its

Cherchez la Femme

greatest results, it may never be detected at all, working as it does through husband, lover, brother, friend, or even less definite channels. It covers all fields of human activity, though more certainly the dramatic, literary, artistic, and political fields than the commercial. Business men do not, as a rule, talk shop with their woman-kind. They are essentially undomestic, and see little of female society. After a hurried breakfast, they are away in the city all day; they come home tired, swallow the only substantial meal of the day, fall asleep over the evening paper, and tumble into bed. The literary man, the artist, the politician, for their part, spend a good deal of their time in female society. This you may perceive at once from the conversation of the women of their circle. These women are good talkers. They are well posted up in the scandals, the intrigues, the jealousies, the wire-pulling in which their men-folk are interested. Well they may be, indeed, seeing that it is mainly they who carry on the underhand game. They often know more of it than their husbands.

Practically, this question of *cherchez la femme* is one of high social and political importance, and does not receive the attention it deserves. I confess myself amazed at the blindness or the ignorance of those who contend that women are cut off from political influence because they do not sit in Parliament. Is there a single member of Parliament in either House who does not acknowledge some degree of petticoat-government? The more intelligent women recognise this, and are content with the existing system, which enables them to exercise all legitimate influence (and perhaps a good deal of illegitimate influence too) in the manner most congenial

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to them. It is for this reason that the agitation for female suffrage is mainly carried on by social derelicts who could not be relied upon to represent anybody but themselves.

Women are not a separate class in the community. They are the mothers and the daughters of the men of every generation, and it would be impossible for one sex to be downtrodden and oppressed without the other immediately suffering. It was a Parliament of men which passed the Married Women's Property Act, and their tardiness in passing it is justified by the fact that, owing to the very *solidarité* of the relations of the sexes, it has turned out to be an instrument of injustice. How many men on the verge of bankruptcy make over their property to their wives in order to be able to cheat their creditors? Every man represents the women of his household in Parliament, no less truly than he does the unknown male voters in his constituency. *A la rigueur*, he may think his wife needs no more protection than he cares to give her. But then he has the interests of his daughters to consider. The warp and the woof of humanity! That is the true definition of the sexual relationship. What would the warp be without the woof, and *vice versa*? Wherever there is a right vindicated or a wrong done, *cherchez la femme*!

The flaw in the argument of the agitators lies in assuming that men and women are rival, not to say hostile, forces, and that men have, by fraud and stratagem, obtained the supremacy which it is now the duty of women to wrest from them as best they can. Such a conception of the relation of the sexes strikes me as grotesque, the fact being that male and female interests are so closely

Sex Rivalry Impossible

interwoven in the web of social life that it is impossible to separate them—hopeless, even, to try to follow the course of the individual strands. Does any ordinary father of girls or boys bestow his affection upon the boys exclusively? Does the mother, on the other hand, pet her girls at the expense of the boys, or treat these latter as hostile to her own cherished sex? As a rule, it will be found that the father leans in fondness towards the girls, and the mother towards the boys. This is one of the ways in which the interests of the sexes are blended. Another is this, that in the mysterious commingling of hereditary influences which takes place at conception, and as the result of which a new being is built up, in irregular proportions, out of the material of a long line of ancestors, the paternal influence seems to be a little more marked in the girl, and the maternal in the boy, than one would be led to expect. Again an interlacing of interests, and that of the most fundamental kind, so as to ensure the essential oneness of the race!

That both propositions may be disputed, I am aware. Scientific observers are not agreed that the preponderance of parental influence is in the direction stated. They think that on the whole there is a tolerable equilibrium maintained in the transmission of male and female characteristics, to say nothing of that disturbing factor ‘prepotency,’ which will create a run of a particular feature in a family—a nose or a mouth—for generations, notwithstanding that each successive marriage imports fresh sap into the genealogical tree. Every one must be aware of examples of the father’s personality passing into the sons, and that of the mother into the daughters. Certainly there is no safe ground for generalising on the subject.

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My own observation, nevertheless, points to a tendency for boys to take after the mother, and girls after the father. Supposing, however, there is nothing but an exact equilibrium maintained between the sexes in this matter, my case is still proved; for it is this: that Nature observes none of that rigid classification of interest which the feminists believe in, but at each generation throws all her material into the common melting-pot.

The question remains as to the attitude of the father towards the worldly interests of his family; and this is rather important, because the father in all ages, so far, has been the law-giver. That his affection goes out preferentially to his girls no one, I fancy, will deny. But does he study their material interests as well? Here some difference of opinion comes in. If the father is well-to-do he sends his sons to Oxford, but is quite content to see his girls come home from the boarding-school with a mere smattering of education and remain at home. Not one father in a thousand, however well-to-do, would dream of sending his girls to Girton. This, say the agitators, is sex prejudice. It is, properly speaking, instinct. The father feels that it is no part of a woman's duty to win a University degree, that it will handicap her rather than advance her in the battle of life.

In order to test the value of the much-vaunted careers that are opened up for women under the educational system, one cannot do better than ask where they land their devotee at fifty years of age. At fifty one has usually broken with the past generation. Parents are dead; the friends of one's youth are no more. One's contemporaries have contracted fresh ties, and are surrounded by fresh interests in which one has no part.

The Marriage Market

What ties and what interests has the female blue-stocking of fifty? If she has been left with a competence she will drift into philanthropy, church work, or politics; if poor, alas! she may be living in one room doing some sort of genteel work at which she earns a pittance, her classics and her mathematics all forgotten, or at least of no sort of present utility. For you will find that the intellectual accomplishments of a spinster of fifty are in small demand. Such as they are they will be found in women of half that age who have good looks and figure in addition, and, other things being equal, it is youth that tells—youth, always youth. It is curious that good looks should enter into the question where the purely intellectual capabilities of women are concerned, seeing that in the world's market there is no demand for the male Adonis; but so it is. It only shows that the sexual influence, taboo it or ignore it as we will, affects all our social relations.

Ostensibly, the independence of women is sought to be secured because of the slackness of the marriage-market; but signs are not wanting that the policy, fostered by the equality movement, is *per se* a mistaken one. Educated young women, of whom there are now so many, complain that with all their accomplishments they are being crushed down to the level of the illiterate worker in point of wages, hours, and even social consideration. The result is not surprising. Unquestionably, education gives the pushing member of society an advantage over his fellows, but only so long as they are less well-educated than himself. What education has done for individuals in the past has been seen and understood even by the illiterate classes; and accordingly education has been the universal cry. It has been every well-meaning poor man's ambition to

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educate his children, and thereby, as he fancied, make ladies and gentlemen of them, to go about the world with permanent 'Sunday clothes' and unsoiled hands. Hence the enormous boom in education during the past five-and-twenty years. Everybody has been intoxicated with the thought of the prosperity, the comfort, and the general well-being that were going to come of education, and lo! as we are beginning to look for these excellent results among the younger generation, it is discovered that the race is still to the swift and the battle to the strong, and that hewers of wood and drawers of water are as indispensable now as ever.

Among young men this has been felt for some time; among young women it is beginning to be felt keenly. In the ever-growing ranks of the latter the disillusionment is perhaps a little sharper than elsewhere. It is generally recognised that marriage is not within every girl's reach, but education has been accepted as the panacea for spinsterhood; so that every year shoals of highly educated young women as well as young men are turned out to earn a livelihood with the help of their accomplishments—their 'Cambridge local' certificates, their music, their shorthand, and I know not what—with the result that the genteel occupations, of which 'typing' is one of the principal, are far more overcrowded than the menial employments. The same remuneration will more easily procure you a girl to solve a problem in mathematics than to sweep down a cobweb, just as among young men there is more eagerness to handle a pen than a shovel, though the latter may be the more remunerative implement.

For the complaint as to the increasing 'unpopularity'

How it might be Improved

of marriage there appears to be some statistical foundation. Among men, after two or three and twenty the marriage curve declines, not to rise again until they are getting into middle age, which would seem to denote a belief on their part that marriage, as at present organised, is rather a one-sided bargain. The cry is not that women want to marry more than they used to do, but that men want to marry less. Every woman still wants a husband, but every man does not nowadays want a wife.

The remedy for this state of things is not obvious, but perhaps it might be found in some increase of the facilities for divorce. It is invariably the case that when a law is made too stringent for the ordinary necessities of human nature it defeats its own purpose; it either falls into abeyance, or human nature dammed up in one channel overflows into another. The extremely complicated provisions of the French law for marriage are probably responsible for the excessive number of irregular unions in France and the indulgence with which they are regarded, a point which may be commended to the attention of the morality-mongers in our midst.

Possibly increased facilities for divorce would have the effect of robbing marriage of some of its terrors. After all, the modern young man may be forgiven for considering it a serious business to put his hand into the bag and draw out a partner with whom he is compelled to pass the remainder of his life whether he proves to be congenially mated or otherwise. There is a very wise Italian saying to the effect that all the brains are not in one head. It applies to nations no less than to individuals. Now, over a very wide stretch of human history, and among civilisations that have been little, if at all, inferior to our

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own, a comparatively slight matrimonial bond has been deemed sufficient to safeguard the interests of the community. The tie of the children must be trusted more than it is to hold couples together. At the same time, divorce being rendered possible, say, by mutual consent, men would probably hesitate less than they now do to incur the responsibilities of marriage.

What is the fact? The nuptial bond is one into which the law invites you freely to enter; there is practically no charge for admission and no restriction as to age or means. But when it comes to unmarried yourself, the law, so conciliatory and indulgent otherwise, suddenly becomes impracticable. Any contract but marriage can be rescinded by mutual consent of the parties. To the Divorce Court, however, there is no sin absolutely so heinous as collusion. Upon adultery, pure and simple, the judge thinks it needless to comment; but collusion, when established, is invariably the subject of strong remarks from the bench. And what is collusion, except an agreement between the parties that they have made a mistake in marrying each other, and that the untying of the knot will be a relief to both? Guilt on both sides, again, which ought surely to be a double reason for the dissolution of the bond, is held in English law to invalidate the claim for divorce on both sides, than which it is impossible to imagine anything more illogical. Consistency would require either that the law should untie the nuptial knot as readily as it now ties it, or that the registrar or the parson, taking his cue from the judges of the Divorce Court, should solemnly inform all marrying couples that no mere verbal assurance of their desire to marry could be accepted, but that they must furnish the strongest

Collusion in Divorce

possible evidence of their affection for each other. The natural result would be that on what appeared to be satisfactory evidence of such affection the ceremony should take place, but that in the event of its being subsequently discovered that the affection was not as real as it had been represented, the Queen's Proctor would intervene to have the faulty union dissolved.

There are only two positions to be consistently held with regard to marriage. The one is, to treat it as the most solemn and binding contract into which the human being can enter. In that case there ought to be no boy-and-girl unions. On the contrary, marriage should be strictly forbidden until the parties were in the full exercise of their legal responsibilities. We have never, in this country, had marriage of that kind, though in France there was a near approach to it under the Code Napoléon before the establishment of divorce. The other view is, to treat marriage as an ordinary civil contract, dissoluble at any time by mutual consent of the parties, who, however, should continue to be held responsible in law for the maintenance of their children. There again the marrying age should be a tolerably mature one. For the boy-and-girl couple, in fact, I see no excuse whatever under any system, rational or ecclesiastical.

Collusion ! Where ordinary principles of justice obtain, there is no more valid ground of action than the collusion of the parties to the suit. There is collusion whenever a debtor acknowledges the justice of his creditor's claim by failing to offer a defence ; collusion whenever an ordinary deed of partnership is dissolved. There is, however, no consistency at present in the legislation as to marriage. On one page the statute-book declares the nuptial union

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to be a civil contract; on the next, in deference to the Church view, it affects to treat it as something else, not to be undone without a deal of trouble. It is in a civil capacity that the judge of the Divorce Court sits on the bench; but it is as the mouthpiece of ecclesiastical prejudice that he speaks.

Notwithstanding that the objections entertained to divorce in this country are now almost entirely religious, the practice of the Church would seem to be less conclusive on this point than the reactionaries contend. Not until the holding of the famous Council of Trent was marriage proclaimed to be a sacrament and, consequently, beyond the jurisdiction of the civil tribunal. By the pious Fathers of the Church, the holy men who interpreted its doctrines (and, be it said, added to them wherever they thought them defective), marriage was reckoned a sinful condition, into which the faithful were warned against entering, and from which they were counselled to extricate themselves with all possible despatch. Not only so, but the Church acted upon its teaching. In the early centuries of the Christian era, material difficulties of every kind were thrown in the way of marriage. Married persons were asked to abstain from cohabitation three days before the communion, and forty days after Easter; next it was held to be as great a sin for a man to cohabit with his wife in Lent as to eat flesh (which I can well believe); then marriage was forbidden during Lent and at sundry other specified seasons, until 'there were but few days in the year in which people could get married at all.' The forbidden degrees of consanguinity and affinity were extended to a ridiculous length; widows who had promised to live a single life were excommunicated if

Proper Selection of Partners

they married again ; and any married woman who wished to be a nun was allowed to leave her husband and retire into a convent, while he was forbidden to take another wife. Some authorities went so far as to declare it doubtful whether married persons cohabiting with each other could be saved. By all—and I am speaking now of the first thousand years of the Christian era—the celibate life was regarded as the only holy life, and to promote it nunneries and monasteries were founded.

It will be seen, therefore, that treating marriage as a civil contract is by no means to fly in the face of the fundamental teachings of Christianity. It is only to repudiate canon-made law, founded upon a dubious interpretation of Scripture and a strained piece of symbolism—the mystic union of Christ and the Church—which would probably never have been insisted upon had not the Latin word for Church been feminine.

The question of the proper selection of partners in wedlock, not only with regard to temperament, but with an eye to the still graver interests of the offspring, is one that has very properly attracted notice of late years. Briefly speaking, the numerous constitutional disorders, from insanity to rheumatism, which a child may inherit from either parent, are always aggravated when there is a double strain of unsoundness—when both parents, that is to say, are similarly affected. ‘Every year,’ remarks a medical authority, ‘thousands of children are begotten with pedigrees which would condemn puppies to the horse-pond.’ Is there anything to be done by way of remedying this evil? A good deal of the unfortunate marrying that goes on is due to sheer ignorance on the part of the public of the effects of crossing in the human

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species. They do not know, what is now a commonplace of medical experience, that a dozen well-marked constitutional diseases, having a common origin in the nervous system, are liable to be metamorphosed in transmission from parent to child, and that a scrofulous taint in the father and a gouty habit in the mother may come out in the child in the form of paralysis or insanity, blindness, deafness, or even criminal and ne'er-do-well propensities. I dare say it would be possible to find a gentleman with a splendid breed of horses in his stable and a swarm of rickety and thoroughly degenerate children in his nursery.

The question then is whether, supposing the necessary knowledge to be disseminated, as it can hardly fail to be in the course of time, a man or a woman would hesitate to contract a union which was bound to be disastrous. In many cases, no doubt, common sense would prevail. We see this distinctly with regard to the marriage of cousins and near kin. Where a stock is radically unsound, the intermarriage of its near members is known to be productive of evil results, and there is a well-marked disposition in the public mind against such unions. When popular knowledge comes to be extended beyond the question of cousinship to that of unfitness generally, the same principle may be expected to operate. It is easy to say that love is not to be reasoned with. It is subordinated to many influences now—to the influence of money, social position, and what not. Why not to the influence of heredity?

A safe beginning might be made by restraining, as far as possible, all persons cursed with the taint of insanity from propagating their kind. The insane taint ought to be as strong a bar to marriage as kinship within the pro

Intellectual Improvement

hibited degrees. And once for all the public mind ought to be disabused of the idea that the children of an insane parent necessarily escape an evil heritage if they happen to have been conceived in a lucid period. The children of Philip drunk inherit exactly the same qualities and defects as those of Philip sober.

When we come to the question of improving the race of men intellectually, formidable difficulties present themselves. First, we have no means of judging as to what is good or bad in Nature's ends ; and, secondly, our means of attaining any given object are so imperfect that it is hardly worth while to put them to the test. No human stud-book could be of much value that covered a less period than one hundred and fifty or two hundred years, and, as it would have to relate to every family in the kingdom, the mechanical difficulty not only of compiling but of housing and consulting the millions of volumes would be insuperable. That is on the assumption that we attempted to carry out the prize-ox principle in its entirety. On its intellectual side, moreover, heredity is apparently so capricious in its working that the results might be far from coming up to expectation. The only principle that could be appealed to with success would be the convenience of individuals themselves. The interests of the species weigh nothing in the scale. For those nobody cares. But it might be possible to persuade people that, if they were nervously unsound, it would be conducive to their comfort to choose a conjugal partner as unlike themselves as possible. Any more ambitious scheme would be doomed to failure, if only because an artificial heredity would tend to the production of uniformity in the species ; and if all men and women were

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pretty much the same in height, in figure, in complexion, in feature, in capacity, in taste—if, in short, there was not a pin to choose between one person or another except on the score of age; and if, further, as the result of this uniformity, we were all subject to the same ailments at the same time, our last state might be worse than our first. People would sigh for the good old days of irrational marriage, when they were permitted to marry a bright little creature, who had an aunt in a lunatic asylum, if they chose, and when the epileptic or the scrofulous were free to make such conquests as lay within their province.

Besides, effective choice, in the matter of husbands and wives, presupposes a state of society very different from that which exists. The opportunities of the marrying man and the marriageable woman are limited at best. A thousand circumstances, each insignificant in itself, tend to restrict their freedom. What young bachelor, however favourably situated, can be said to have the choice of more than two or three girls out of the hundreds of thousands of possible partners statistically at his disposal? And what young woman of only average merit can rely upon more than one or two genuine offers in her lifetime? How many indeed, perfectly adapted for wifedom and maternity, never get an offer at all.

The majority of marriages are contracted doubtless on no particular principle. Young people thrown together by accident marry as a matter of course. There is a general average of attractiveness in the sexes that serves to bring about this result. Nature is content, like the master of a gaming-table, to establish one or two chances in her favour, and let evolution pursue its course.

To what end? That, the biologist must find out if he

Elective Affinities

can. Even where the elective affinities declare themselves, we must guard against supposing that they tend to the production of what we are accustomed to call superior types. Goethe's long attachment to Christiane Vulpius, we may suppose, was an exemplification of the elective affinities, since he was the inventor of the term. Let us see how they worked out in his case. It was at thirty-seven that the poet met his fate. Christiane Vulpius was a flower-girl, the daughter of a drunkard whose vice she inherited, and had little or no education. But she exercised an infinitely greater influence over Goethe than any other woman, and it lasted for twenty-eight years, and till her death. Her charm, according to Lewes, consisted in 'a quick mother-wit, a lively spirit, a loving heart, and great aptitude for domestic duties,' qualities which in her youth were combined with 'golden locks, laughing eyes, ruddy cheeks, kiss-provoking lips, and a small and gracefully rounded figure.' In short, Christiane Vulpius was a 'free, healthy specimen of nature, undistorted by artifice.' So far, well. But the single son whom she bore to Goethe proved less than a mediocrity.

I believe that any two healthy young people, of whatever type, if thrown into each other's society, are prepared to love each other sufficiently for all practical purposes. Chance is, in fact, the great arbiter in matrimonial connections, which is the reason why we are all the mongrels we are. Any young man or woman who gets married might mate with any one of a thousand other candidates in the country with equal chances of happiness. If affinities counted for anything, the human race would long ago have split up into separate types or sections, which we know is not the case.

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Physical heredity, I suppose, everybody accepts. There is not a monthly nurse who does not declare that every new-born child is like its father, the father, that is to say, in Blackstone's cautious language, *quem nuptiæ demonstrant*, though, to be sure, it would be a hazardous thing to say that it looked more like some other gentleman living up the street. The monthly nurse is a very poor scientific authority, but at least her testimony shows which way the wind blows. The important question now is, how far intellectual results are to be obtained in the offspring by a careful pairing of human couples. At present the direct transmission of intellectual qualities from parent to child is quite the exception, although the transmission of physical characteristics is the rule.

Well, I have no hesitation in saying that in theory the intellectual results are as attainable as the physical. Physiologists and psychologists are now pretty well agreed that all mental and moral action is the outcome of an inherited condition of the brain and nervous system. The vital force, which you may call the soul if you like, is still a mystery, and may ever remain so; but given the cerebral machine, it may be counted upon to work in accordance with its structure, like any other machine. Why should not the cerebral mechanism be as reproducible as, say, the bony structure of the body? I imagine the difficulty lies in the extraordinary complexity and delicacy of the brain, with its countless nerve-cells and fibres. Broadly speaking, all human brains resemble each other, but distinct differences are seen—in fact, no two can be said to be alike; and we know that these differences are outwardly manifested in character and aptitude. Nevertheless, the details that distinguish one

A Mongrel Society

personality from another, or one form of genius from another, are so fine, so subtle, that they elude control. We have no means of judging what sort of mental blend the offspring of a given father and mother will show. This can only be due to our ignorance of the conditions, because if you confine yourself to broad effects mental heredity is established. Thus a defective brain in one of the parents, and more particularly in both, will certainly be productive of some result in the child, though it is impossible to predict what. Nor is our ignorance surprising. Only in one way can it be remedied—and that way we have never tried with the human species, though breeders of animals know it well—namely, by watching the results of heredity, mental as well as physical, over a large number of generations, eight or ten at least.

Every human couple now paired are absolute mongrels of perfectly unknown descent, and it is just as impossible to obtain definite results with them as it would be from a couple of mongrel dogs. Those who are anxious to breed a race of Platos must therefore possess their soul in patience. In fact, they can never see their cherished object realised. If we started now with certain specially-selected couples whose progeny should be 'pure-bred,' ten generations, or, say, two hundred years would have to elapse before the requisite data could be obtained for the scientists to theorise upon; and with human nature as it is, it is safe to say that such an experiment will never be carried out. Mongrels we are, and mongrels we shall remain. And happy is the individual who, among the infinite chances of the protoplasmic blend from which he springs, gets a little more than his share, some combination of nerve-cell and fibre which will give him a special

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aptitude and lift him above the crowd! It is all chance-work, this, at present. Still, I have no doubt but that with the requisite knowledge (and the requisite powers of compulsion) we could breed a race of specially gifted men. For the mental qualities (though much more complex) are clearly governed by the same laws as the physical. This we see in the case of the artificial breeding of animals, where instinct is developed to order as well as physical shape.

The whole subject is a fascinating one; and in the 100,000 or the 500,000 years of existence still in all probability allotted to the human race, there may be time and inclination on their part to work it out to strange issues! There may be as many different breeds of men developed as there already are of dogs, or monkeys, or ants. There may be a specially-bred military class; together with artists, men of letters (if the human race still wants to read), mechanical engineers, and—who knows?—even philosophers and theologians—since, however wise the human race may become, there will always be the unknown to speculate upon. Short of these results, there might, of course, be a complete subversion of our educational and legal theories and systems which are all based upon the necessities of the average mongrel man.

It does not appear that the age of the parents exercises any effect upon the robustness of the offspring. This is indeed a corner-stone of the Weismann theory. At the age of sixty-five, Lesseps, the constructor of the Suez Canal, married a second wife, and had by her a large family, the younger members of which continued to make their appearance until he was upon the confines of eighty years of age. Such cases as the famous French engineer's are not

Parents and Offspring

unknown, but it may safely be said that they are as rare as the highest forms of genius. Old Parr is said to have become a father at the ripe age of a hundred and forty ; but Parr's extreme longevity is doubtful. As there are no Old Parrs in these days, it is more than probable that, capricious as Nature may be, within limits, there has been some confusion as to date of birth between himself and a grandfather of the same name. But Haller, who was a trustworthy scientific observer, declares that the procreative capacity may exist in man up to his ninetieth year ; and the law of England, which commits so many blunders, does not fall into that of saying definitely at what age a man may not become a father. The celebrated Banbury peerage case, which came before the House of Lords in the year 1813, affords a precedent for paternity up to the age of eighty. It was there insisted upon that the ancestor of the claimant could not have been the son of Lord Banbury, because that nobleman was eighty years of age when the child was born. But the judges laid it down that neither law nor science could assign such a limit, and the case remains on record for our instruction.

Nor does the fact that a man is nominally 'cured' of insanity relieve his offspring from the dangers of an evil heredity. The flaw is in his constitution from the first, and remains till the end—a fact which it is to be regretted our public authorities ignore. Whatever may be said for the humanity of our modern methods, I doubt whether our solicitude for the welfare of lunatics is a good thing for the race. In the old days they were killed off with very little compunction ; they were practically left to die. Now we coddle them up, doing our best to prolong their wretched lives. It is very likely a mistaken kindness ;

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but that is not the worst. We discharge them from the asylums half cured and allow them to propagate their kind. A few years ago a horrible case came to light in London. A man had been in asylums off and on for twenty years. In the intervals of his seclusion he lived with his wife, and had no fewer than eight children, all branded, of course, with the terrible stigma of their father's disease. In the end the miserable man murdered his wife as she lay in childbed, and was then sent to Broadmoor. How was it that, having been in an asylum early in life, he was not kept there? In the first instance, because of the necessity which local bodies feel of keeping down the rates; and secondly, because for some years past there has been an Act of Parliament in force, according to which medical superintendents of asylums are compelled at the end of a twelvemonth to discharge every patient who does not happen then to be exhibiting dangerous symptoms.

Hence, thousands of half-cured lunatics are poured out of the asylums every year, in order, like the murderer above mentioned, to go on having children in their own image. Half cured! Not even that; for the medical superintendents, as I have been assured by one or two of them personally, know perfectly well that their discharged patients will come back to them, perhaps with blood on their hands. But unless the lunatics are continuously 'dangerous,' they cannot, under our present system of administration, be kept permanently confined. It is a ghastly state of things, truly!

While the individual is the slave of his organisation, powerless to alter the conditions of his personal lease of life, there is every reason to suppose that a family stock

Family Stock

may be strengthened by a judicious course of living extended over a number of generations. In proof of this we may point to the extraordinary amount of reinvigoration that the English section of the Royal caste has undergone in the Victorian epoch. It has received no infusion of fresh blood, as peerages and aristocracies, however exclusive, are constantly doing. Yet from being radically unsound, as it was certainly in the time of the Georges, the Royal caste has developed into an exceedingly prolific and healthy body. The Queen has had nine children and forty grand-children. This is a remarkable record for half a century; and if the general population of Great Britain had increased in the like ratio, it would be running into hundreds of millions. In fact, there would by this time be neither food nor elbow room for the immense masses of people that would have grown up, had every English couple who married in the year 1840 had as many descendants as Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. In the fourth generation of our Royal family the same prolificness continues. The Queen has over thirty great grand-children, and it is not unlikely that there may be one hundred and fifty or two hundred of them.

From the biological point of view, such an improvement in any section of the human stock as these figures imply is absolutely without precedent, and it is interesting to inquire into its causes. 'Fresh blood' would have been an easy explanation of the facts; but unfortunately for the theorist, who has been so eloquent as to the perniciousness of 'exclusiveness' and 'privilege' and 'marrying-in-and-in,' there has been no fresh blood introduced into the Royal caste to account for this regeneration. The Royal caste,

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needless to say, is the most exclusive in the world. There is no other body of population to compare with it in that respect, and previous to the Victorian era its biological record was uniformly bad. Throughout the past five or six centuries, for instance, the Royal caste has not kept pace in numbers or efficiency with the general population of Europe; its percentage of insanity was extraordinarily high, and is high still where the influence of the English Royal stock has not yet penetrated; while in respect of general vigour and fecundity, it stood low. The Napoleonic influence very nearly brought into the Royal caste the desired infusion of fresh blood. The first Napoleon secured an alliance with the Royal House of Austria; but the fruit of this union, Napoleon II., the poor little ailing King of Rome, ended the Napoleonic line almost as soon as it was begun. Later, Napoleon III. succeeded in establishing himself among the Sovereigns of Europe; and his issue, the Prince Imperial, had all gone well with the usurper, might have obtained admission into the Royal caste. But here again an adverse fate intervened. The Prince Imperial, banished from the throne of France, sought destruction, and perhaps fame, in the Zulu war in South Africa, and perished miserably there, without issue, ending irretrievably the Napoleonic legend.

The salvation of the Royal caste was to come from quite an unexpected quarter; for, indeed, salvation was needed, as is shown by the fact that the thrones of Germany and Russia, to say nothing of the smaller Royal interests of Europe, are now occupied by Queen Victoria's descendants. As to the general inefficiency of the Royal stock in England in Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart times, there is abundant evidence. Not to go too far back, our present Hanoverian

The Royal Caste

dynasty at its origin was not particularly robust. On the failure of the direct line of the Stuarts, the succession passed to the family of Elizabeth, daughter of James I., who had married the Elector Palatine, Frederick v. Although there was a numerous issue from this marriage, the majority died either young or childless—a pretty sure proof of unsoundness—and one, at least, insane. It was Sophia, the youngest daughter of Elizabeth, and sister of the unhappy lunatic, who became heiress to the English throne. Did she leave the family taint behind her when she quitted Germany in order to take up her ancestral heritage in this country? We find an answer to this question in the debaucheries and excesses of the four Georges, in one of whom, George III., the positive insanity of the Stuarts reappeared. Among the Cæsars, and in the various Savoy, Spanish, and Portuguese dynasties, the same results are manifest. Nor is the lesson different when we take up the story of the more or less exclusive aristocracies of Europe. They were all degenerate, all rickety, undersized, scrofulous; all tended to die out. It was said that the life of a family of the old French *noblesse* was three hundred years at the most, though members of noble families would seem to be exempt from much of the wear and tear of ordinary life.

What is the secret of this proneness to degeneracy in all these exclusive circles and castes of society? Scientific writers have generally attributed it to the custom so prevalent among them of marrying in-and-in. But the case of the Queen's family seems to call for a revision of this facile hypothesis. They have married in-and-in as much as any exclusive section of the human race ever did, and it is impossible to say that they are not at least as

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healthy and robust as the average of mankind. Indeed, their fecundity and the smallness of their death-rate would seem to place them in an exceptionally healthy position. Apparently the change is due, in a large measure, to the strictness of the morality that has grown up in courts during the past half century, and which Queen Victoria's example and precept have done so much to promote. As the direct result of this, we have a system of very early marriage among princes and princesses, which together with the purity and exclusiveness of their home life—influences also to be seen operating in the case of the clergy—tends to the production of large families. If this view is correct, then the tendency to decay of the earlier castes and cliques of society above referred to must have been due to their profligacy, *i.e.* to their late marriages and to the small respect in which the nuptial bond was held among them. Whether the scientific mind has given sufficient heed to these sources of degeneracy in royal and other exclusive stocks, may be doubted. Certainly the case of the Royal Family ought to abate some of the confidence of the theorists, who maintain that a privileged class, royal or otherwise, necessarily carries within its bosom the seeds of decay. Though marrying in-and-in must be bad if the stock is already degenerate, it is clearly possible, even within the comparatively narrow limits of the Royal caste, for a physiological outcome of the happiest character to take place.

Yet no system is free from difficulty, and it may be that in escaping the dangers of decay and extinction, the Royal caste, under pressure of the modern morality which sits upon princes as heavily as it does upon the clergy, and upon all classes of public men, is going to incur a risk of

Marrying in-and-in

another and not less formidable description. The Queen has at the present moment over seventy living descendants. If the Royal caste continues to multiply at this rate, it cannot for many more generations retain its exclusiveness; nor can it hope to be supported as it is, directly or indirectly, by the State. Into that question it is, perhaps, too soon to enter. For the present we may congratulate ourselves that all danger of a failure in the succession—a very troublesome contingency in the history of States—is a wholly negligible quantity.

It is on questions of morality that the advocates of equality, as between the sexes, fail most completely in their argument. A good-natured tolerance in all societies is shown towards young men who 'sow their wild oats.' I am not sure that one who claimed to be entitled to wear a sprig of orange blossom on his nuptial day would be as highly esteemed, even by the bride, as the equality-mongers would have us believe. But think how vastly different the state of society would be in this country if it were the women and not the men who before marriage were expected to sow their wild oats!

'By the loss of what is called purity or innocence,' it is declared, 'a man loses just as much as a woman, neither more nor less.' From such a basis you may carry your argument in two directions. You may say that, as a woman is expected to include virtue in her marriage portion, so must a man; or, conversely, that if a man has a right to sow his wild oats, so has a woman. I am not sure with which of these contentions the new moralists as a body elect to identify themselves; but when you preach the equality of the sexes in morality you must, in the event of your failing to level up, be prepared to level

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down. For the argument cuts two ways. If men are past praying for, as probably they are, it only remains for women to relax their own higher standard of conduct so as to conform to that set them by their lords and masters.

Chastity is sneered at as a 'hall-mark invented by society and by religion for the protection of the male in his quasi-commercial dealings with the female.' Quite so. A hall-mark it is, but a necessary one, seeing that in a free state of society like ours it is the only possible means of regulating the paternity of children. The maternity of a child is always certain, but doubt may exist as to its paternity unless a rigid morality is exacted from women, either through the pressure of public opinion, as at present, or by shutting them up in a harem, Oriental fashion. If the husband has to support a family, he is not to be blamed for stipulating that it should be entirely his own. *Ipso facto*, the argument that the loss of purity or innocence is the same to a man as to a woman falls to the ground. For no ante-nuptial transgression on the man's part affects in this way the family born to him in wedlock.

Of the husband's extra-conjugal fault nothing remains except a sentiment; the wife, on the other hand, may throw upon her husband the responsibility of maintaining a child which is not his, but to which, nevertheless, he is compelled by law to give his name. Such a material hardship as this could not by any chance be inflicted upon the female partner in the matrimonial firm. Instinctively the great majority of women admit that they must be judged by severer standards than men; instinctively they feel that theirs is the greater responsibility, and instinct is the only sound basis of morality.

Other well-marked moral differences between the sexes

Inequality of the Sexes

betray themselves. The women who could take a bet seriously, who would think of selling their jewellery, for instance, to pay when they lose, are few. And let no husband tell his wife that Mr. So-and-so has asked him, in connection with some affair, to accept a little something which he knows perfectly well to be a bribe! Her answer, in nine cases out of ten, will be, 'You take it, my dear! If you don't, somebody else will.' The sense of honour peculiar to the man in business matters is in the woman of the same education and social rank practically non-existent.

The truth is that honour differs so much in the two sexes that a fair comparison between them can hardly be made. On the points with regard to which women are scrupulous, men are not, and *vice versa*. Broadly, it will be found that the characteristics of women are those of a class or a race which holds its own by ruse and cajolery rather than strength, and which is always more or less on the defensive.

Whatever women are, therefore—strong where men are weak, and weak where men are strong—that they are by force of circumstances. And let them not complain of men either; for men are as they have made them. It is said that every country has the Jews it deserves. With as much truth it may be argued that women have the men they deserve, or, at least, the men which it has been the interest of the sex to mould and fashion from the beginning. Above all, it is well for both to remember that on their present working basis the attractively feminine and the attractively masculine must always be distinct. It is only on such terms that the sexes will continue to find themselves mutually interesting. The masculine woman

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is as great a monstrosity as the feminine man. And not alone in morals is this so ; the principle extends to lath-keys, cigarettes, ties, waistcoats, Newmarket coats, and the divided skirt—if not to wranglerships and university degrees.

CHAPTER VIII

Moral Spectacles—Faith and Scepticism—Belief in a Future Life—A Non-competitive Society—Ideals—Altruism—Its Growth and Tendency—Over-population—The 'Prudential Check'—The Religion of Science.

THE most important of considerations, though one of the least regarded in our social system, is point of view. Supposing humanity were given a new set of senses, the whole aspect of the universe would change in a moment of time. All the old problems would disappear from our ken, and a whole body of new ones of an unsuspected and previously inconceivable character would take their place. Who can say what sort of world it is that a dog lives in? We are accustomed to think that a dog lives pretty much the life of his master, in a little round of sleeping, waking, feeding, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, and sense of duty. But the world must be a very different one to the dog, nevertheless, and for this reason: that whereas our principal perceptive faculties are sight and touch, the dog's great organ of intellectual discrimination is smell, a sense in which man is notably deficient. In conducting an inquiry into the nature of any object, the dog proceeds by smell as much as man does by sight; he has, of course, the complementary sense of sight, but that is quite as subordinate with him as touch is with us. Now, memory, there is every reason to believe, is a faint revival in the nerve cells of the brain of an excitation

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previously communicated to them from the outer world, such revival being either spontaneous or aroused by the association of ideas ; and the likelihood is that when a dog remembers a place or a person it is less a visual image that comes before him than a combination of smells, a mental effect of which it is almost impossible for us, with our faculties as they are, to form any conception. Very curious, therefore, must be a dog's reflections ; curious also his dreams, since they, too, must be based mainly upon the sense of smell.

If we apply this reasoning to other animals, it will be seen that the aspect under which the world presents itself must be as various as the countless species of created things. How different would be our conception of the universe had we been born without the faculty of sight, or with perfectly developed feelers instead of eyes ! If we had even the dog's sense of smell, how enormously our social relations would be altered ! Beauty, for one thing, would probably cease to appeal to the eye to anything like the extent it does ; and there would be no need for the jealous wife to wonder what sort of company her husband kept away from home. A sniff at his clothes, and she would know.

Let us not despise the old Berkeleyan theory that the world we see and touch is not an abstract independent substance, but depends for its actuality upon being perceived, or, in other words, that the universe is to us what we perceive it to be, but to other eyes and other organisations may be—nay, must be—something totally different. I look out upon the world and see many things that I consider wrong—poverty, suffering, crime. But what right have I to say that they are wrong ? Only this, that they pro-

The East and the West

duce a jarring effect upon the mechanism I call my mind. Such an admission necessarily takes us one step further. How is the jarring effect to be remedied? Clearly in two ways, of which the simpler is to give some twist to the mechanism of your mind, so that it shall receive and register its impressions smoothly. Conceivably the universe might be altered to suit your eye, but it would be easier to alter your eye to suit the universe. Here, then, we come to something new and curious, which Berkeley did not suggest, though it grows naturally out of his system—namely, that the best way to remedy faulty things is not to toil at *them*, but to change our moral spectacles.

All men certainly do not look at the world with the same eyes or the same understanding. The theory of the East is not the theory of the West. When fire or flood or famine or pestilence overtakes the Oriental, he does not complain; he folds his arms and accepts these things as the work of Allah or Vishnu, and all for the best, as they probably are. At such things, however, we howl. Christianity rather feebly preaches resignation, but this note is getting weaker almost year by year, while our protest against the ways of Providence gets shriller and shriller.

Does civilisation, then, mean a growing warp in our way of looking at things, and could all the apparent evils of society be cured, say, by adjusting the camera? I do not put this forward as a working hypothesis; for, after all, we poor flies upon the wheel can only talk and act as we are enabled to do. But I suggest it as a subject of reflection to those who, like advanced writers and doctrinaires, are disposed to take rather a high line with Providence.

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What would not the sceptic give to be able to say with Newman—‘I think it impossible to withstand the evidence which is brought for the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, or for the motion of the eyes of the pictures of the Madonna in the Roman States. I see no reason to doubt the material of the Lombard Cross at Monza, and I do not see why the Holy Coat at Trèves may not have been what it professes to be. I firmly believe that portions of the true Cross are at Rome and elsewhere, that the crib of Bethlehem is at Rome, and the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul. Also, I firmly believe that the relics of the Saints are doing innumerable miracles and graces daily. I firmly believe that before now Saints have crossed the seas without vessels, multiplied grain and bread, cured innumerable diseases, and stopped the operations of the laws of the universe in a multitude of ways’? To be able to believe like that must be an enviable condition of mind. To blame those who have it not for not having it is, however, just as sensible and wise as it would be to reproach a dwarf with not being six feet high.

After all, what does it matter whether the Archbishop of Canterbury, General Booth, or the Pope is right? They are all right from their point of view—the only valid standpoint for them. And I am equally right from my point of view when I say that the universe is too vast and too complex and the mystery of life too deep for minds of the calibre of ours to grasp. We are all of us like lost travellers wandering in the darkness and in the desert, seeing only at our feet the little gleam of light thrown by the mental lamp that we each carry. Of the extent and ‘lie’ of the desert we, with our unaided intelligence, know

Morality

nothing. Some of us have had charts and directions thrust into our hands, to enable us to make for one particular goal and avoid another. But the authenticity of these documents is questioned, and so is the authority of our various self-constituted guides. Instead of moving forward in a straight line which might lead us somewhere, I believe we often, like the real lost traveller, move in a circle and go over the same ground again and again in the belief that we are making progress. Probably our best course is to move along the line of least resistance. In the main that will be found to be the line prescribed by morality, which may be defined as the lesson of experience tempered by expediency and aspiration.

All religions are based upon morality. In some directions they exact too much, and in others too little from human nature. Hence in course of time a civil morality grows up, not entirely identical with the ecclesiastical morality, but still serving the same purpose. Compare the Ten Commandments with the law which a stipendiary magistrate administers, and you will see what I mean. If you charged a youth at Bow Street with failing to honour his father and mother, for example, would the worthy magistrate convict! On the other hand, if a publican kept open his house beyond hours he would have something to say, although there is nothing in the Ten Commandments against that. Morality, both civil and ecclesiastical, is always in danger of becoming a mere fetich. The original meaning fading out of it, it is apt to degenerate into a mere form. We have to guard against that. In the case of the civil morality that becomes antiquated Parliament can pass an amending Act. Unfortunately, nothing of that kind is now done in

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matters of religion. Formerly, the Councils of the Church (*e.g.* the famous Council of Trent) legislated for the faithful exactly like Parliament; but we are culpably allowing a good deal of Christian doctrine to degenerate into fetichism, and to be as salt that has lost its savour.

It may be doubted whether the future life is a particularly vivid conception to the majority of men. Religion has a great many lip-servants. There are few who serve her with their hearts. Men, even professing Christians, seldom act as if the prize of eternal life were as real to them as the possibility of a dividend in a mining company. Look at the trouble they are at to get to the latest goldfield. If they would only put forth half as much effort to get to heaven, the churches would have a remarkable access of prosperity. Do the majority of people realise what enormous interests are involved in what is technically called the scheme of salvation? I imagine not, otherwise they could never betray the apathy they do in the matter. They profess to believe, and perhaps persuade themselves that they believe—I am speaking of the entirely respectable church-going majority—but in their hearts—well, they feel that the future life is a long way off, and that on the whole there is a good deal of uncertainty about it. If you doubt this, imagine what would be the effect if, instead of eternal happiness, the churches promised their adherents, on a certain date, say twenty years ahead, the immeasurably inferior gift of £50,000, secured not in heaven, but on the Bank of England!

Would there be much need for missionary effort then? Would not the very heathen, as soon as the facts were placed before them, fall over each other in their eagerness

Heaven or an Annuity?

to be baptized? Would the Society for the Conversion of the Jews have any cause to deplore the smallness and the costliness of their annual catch of converts? It is very sad; but if you look the facts in the face, you will conclude with me that there is a great deal of floating religious sentiment which has no very substantial basis to it. With the exception of a small and earnest band of worshippers in every sect, the public do not, to any marked extent, testify to the faith that is supposed to be in them—in a practical sense, I mean. Ninety-nine of them might say, with Goethe—

‘Die Botschaft hör’ ich wohl,
Allein mir fehlt der Glaube.’

In other words, they hear the offer made them every Sunday, but they doubt the security.

Would you have another instance of our national illogicality in this respect? We have a State-supported Church which teaches that all who are not Christians, and even Christians of a particular brand, are lost. Nevertheless, we tolerate and protect and furnish with facilities for their worship and for the education of their young other sects of a wholly different way of thinking. What is more, we are a ‘great Mohammedan Power,’ bound to protect in their own countries our fellow Mohammedan subjects in the exercise of a creed wholly opposed to and incompatible with Christianity in all its forms. The Queen is the defender of Islamism as well as of the Christian faith. Probably if we were as sincere in our religious professions as we think we are, we could not tolerate such a state of things. Mohammed did not do so—he had a very short way with heretics; and the Sultan, to do him justice, continues where he can to offer unbelievers Islamism or the sword.

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The old heretic-burners in this and other countries were logical; and if we were, we should at the present day be carrying the English Prayer-book through India at the point of the sword, and not only so, but suppressing by one means or another Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians, and all other dissenters at home. The Imperial idea is an admirable thing, but it carries strange obligations with it—how strange I am afraid we do not always realise. It looks, does it not, as if it were incompatible with sincerity in our religious convictions?

Morality in its widest sense is neither more nor less than a set of rules which the majority of the members of a community agree upon observing for their mutual convenience. The more essential of these rules, such as respecting your neighbour's property, his ox, and his ass, and so on, are embodied in the criminal law, and enforced by penalty. Others less insisted upon, such as respecting your neighbour's wife, are enforced merely by public opinion, a less effectual instrument than fine or imprisonment, but still not without its value. Obviously, the morality of a nation depends upon its circumstances. One set of rules may suit one people, and another another, though on certain main elementary principles all codes are pretty much alike.

Why, it may be asked, not define morality as the spirit of the Christian religion? So I would, if I were considering the subject in relation solely to ourselves. Much of our morality is of Christian origin. If a nation possesses a religion, its morality is usually embodied in that. If, like Japan, it has no religion to speak of, morality has to be taught as one of the elementary subjects at school. As to the expediency of introducing principles of morality

Vices and Virtues

into the relations of man and man, I suppose we are all agreed, or at least the majority of us—for the criminal is a dissenter. It would be impossible for society to hang together if those principles were relaxed. No property. no rights of any kind being respected, and no man's word being good for anything, we should speedily lapse into chaos. But this state of things could not last. Honest-minded citizens would band together for their mutual protection, vigilance societies would be formed, and presently a new morality would spring up on pretty much the same lines as the old.

As circumstances shape our moral code, so from time to time our practice in morality gets a little out of harmony with our theory. I do not know that the commercial morality of the day is exactly that which is professed in the churches or even in the newspapers. It has, I fear, already become an article in our commercial code of morality that a lie concerning the origin or the quality of goods does not matter. A lie told for business purposes is, in short, no longer a lie, though socially it would still expose a man to obloquy. So with cheating. At cards it is disreputable ; but if you are a local tradesman, you may cheat your customer as much as you can. It is notorious that in these days of fierce competition many of the smaller tradesmen have to live on their cheatings.

As to such matters as suicide or infanticide, opinion, taking the world as a whole, has differed, and largely. In fact, vices and virtues appear to be distributed rather capriciously up and down the moral scale. It is said that the gods are often moved to laughter at the spectacle of men and their ways. Is there anything more immoral, if you look into it, than the British army of which we are so

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proud? What is a soldier but a hired bravo, who engages for a small sum per day to kill anybody—foreigner or fellow-countryman—whom the Government asks him to kill, without any sort of inquiry into the rights or wrongs of the case? Suppose the soldier, brought face to face with the enemy and told to shoot, were to say to his commanding officer, 'All right, but wait a minute. Tell me what he has done. I don't want to shoot anybody who may be doing only what I should do in his place!' The conscience of the civilian, evidently, cannot be the conscience of the soldier.

Much of our morality is imbedded in popular proverbs, and is either wrong or out of date.

If you stop the man in the street, and ask him whether honesty is the best policy, he will probably answer, Yes. What is more, he will believe that he has told you the truth. Follow him in his daily avocations, however, and you will find that at almost every turn he is doing something which is not strictly honest according to any reasonable interpretation either in word or deed, but which he, nevertheless, calculates in his heart of hearts will turn out to his advantage. Moreover, his calculation cannot be so far out, because every day he verifies it, and every day, if experience were against him, he could turn over a new leaf, which he does not.

'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' If this were true of the shorn lamb, or anything like true, there would be an end of Darwinism. Sterne's now famous saying existed in germ long before he launched it upon a reverential world, no less pious an authority than George Herbert having expressed it thus, 'To a close shorn sheep, God gives wind by measure'; in which form, of

Why are we nearly all Christians?

course, the sentiment was too transparently false to take the public in. The shorn sheep has to take its chance with the woolliest member of the flock, and the shorn lamb likewise, though such is the magic of words that the latter seems to be enveloped in a sort of protecting atmosphere of sympathy. Sterne availed himself of the poetic glamour of the phrase without pausing to inquire whether, as a matter of fact, lambs are shorn at all.

The moral proverb is useful in supplying commonplace minds with a harmless form of comment, adapted to all the relations of life. It is said that England, France, and Germany boast, each, several thousands of proverbs. But in the illiterate countries, where thought is less flexible, there are naturally a far greater number. The East teems with proverbs; and in Spain they are estimated at from thirty to forty thousand. In point of fact many people never strike out an original idea for themselves. Their talk consists in stringing together set phrases that they have picked up, and their ideation is of the same groovy character.

This being so, the question arises, Why are we nearly all Christians? The answer is that there is an atmosphere in this country which gives us the Christian tone, and, failing any more active agency pulling in an opposite direction, we subscribe more or less sincerely to the current doctrine. When the late Dr. Jowett was asked by his superiors, in the early days, whether he could sign the Thirty-nine Articles, he looked up with a bland smile of acquiescence, saying, 'If you have a little ink!' There are few people who could not sign anything in the way of religious doctrine if they had a little ink. But Christianity is a broad term. Why are there a steady proportion of Churchmen, Roman Catholics, and Noncon-

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formists according to population? Do all the members of these sects reason out their creed and adopt it only after the mature deliberation which it unquestionably deserves? Of course not. Environment again has its effect. Born into Church or Nonconformist surroundings, the average man becomes a Churchman or a Nonconformist. Association and habit determine his attitude. If he possesses a vigorous and original mind, he will in the end cut his cloth to the pattern that suits him best; but, for the most part, he will content himself with the conventional wear of his family or his parish.

As showing the influence of atmosphere, note further this: that in a Roman Catholic country the majority of children born grow up Roman Catholics; in a Protestant country, Protestant, and so on. The chances of a baby born in Middlesex becoming a Mohammedan or a Fire Worshipper must be fractionally minute. Yet communities exist where the presumption is enormously in favour of that course of development.

A non-competitive society is an idle dream. Men are born with a great diversity of talents, and one of the most deeply rooted of their instincts is the competitive. In fact, if the evolutionists are to be believed, that is the one ground of hope—if it is worth while to hope—for improvement, since non-competition would inevitably mean stagnation and decay.

What a curious, not to say impossible, world it would be if all the good people who pray nightly for the abolition of sin and evil had their prayers granted. After all, goodness is only relative to badness. In a world regenerated up to the level of perfection dreamt of by Tolstoi, there would be no opportunity for the exercise of the

Too much Goodness

Christian virtues. The dead level of goodness would be appalling. Men who dream of a heaven of shining streets and perpetual anthems, and of an omniscient and omnipresent Creator, or even of the social conditions that Tolstoi would introduce, forget that the fundamental principle of life, as understood by the human mind, is change, and that absence of change is death. Life in a world of perfect goodness would be indistinguishable from vegetation—and, perhaps, in this respect, I am doing the vegetable kingdom an injustice. Observe, that from a world of perfect goodness even such primitive ideas as heaven and hell, reward and punishment, would have to be eliminated. There would be nothing to live for nothing to die for, nothing to hope, nothing to fear.

The proper attitude of the Christian mind, therefore, would seem to be to pray that evil might continue, in order that goodness should have a chance of asserting itself. If this seems a work of supererogation, the Christian ought, at least, thankfully to accept the wicked world as it is, so that he may have an opportunity of excelling by comparison with his neighbours.

That morality, even of the fetich or pagan species, is beneficial to a community is not to be denied. In Fiji the missionaries, with the best intentions, have made war upon the local fetiches and superstitions, most of which they have succeeded in uprooting. One of the most important of these so-called superstitions was that every scrap of offal ought to be burnt, otherwise evil spirits or demons would be evoked. Unquestionably this superstition had a hygienic origin. Christianity, however, has superseded it with unfortunate results. It has abolished the belief in immediate punishments and rewards through supernatural

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agencies, and has told the poor savage to look forward to the administration of justice in a dim and remote future life.

As this conception of a future life even to the civilised mind is never much of a reality, how can we expect it to be so to the savage? In point of fact, as soon as he is relieved of the fear of immediate consequences from his laziness, he proceeds to indulge in that vice to the top of his bent, leaving matters to adjust themselves in the distant and nebulous future as best they may. Provided it does not observe morality in the letter rather than the spirit, a moral nation is, I should say, more likely to hold its own than one of the contrary character. For, after all, morality is only expediency to which in parts religious sanction is attached.

The mistake commonly made in discussing the future of our species is to assume that Nature works upon the lines of our moral ideals, and that the highly developed race of the future will consist of men noble, unselfish, honest, faithful, peaceable, sympathetic, and forgiving, doing unto others as they would be done by, cherishing their enemies, loving those who revile them, and when smitten on the one cheek turning the other also. Assuming such a race could be brought into existence on the most perfect lines ever formulated at Exeter Hall, there is much reason to fear that it would go down in the struggle for life. If I am right in this supposition—it follows that the ‘good’ man, as we know him, the generous man, the sympathetic man, the man who would not hurt a fly, who is a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who is an Anti-Vivisectionist, and who shudders when he hears of the poor savage races being mowed down by Maxim guns—it follows, I say, that such a man, so far

Past Civilisations

from being good in Nature's sense, is really a degenerate member of his species, whose multiplication in a community presages its decay. What should we say of the tiger who was afflicted with the idea that his claws hurt the little lambs that he had to feed upon, and who allowed other and fiercer tigers to pull them out of his grasp? Would he not do well to renounce his tigership once for all? If he did not, Nature, we may be sure, would speedily wipe out him and his kind. Is it possible for a man to observe all the precepts of morality, and yet to make headway among his fellows, or even to hold his own? Unfortunately, experience teaches us that it is the unscrupulous, the hard-hearted, and the selfish, who become prosperous members of the community!

A civilised community is one in which there has grown up, by the operation of unknown forces, a certain amount of altruistic sentiment—consideration for others, forbearance, devotion to ideals, and the humane and moral sentiments in general. With this condition of things the cultivation of the arts has a great deal to do. It is impossible for an artistic community, in the highest sense of the word, to be rapacious and overbearing with its neighbours. It necessarily frowns upon war and cruelty of every kind. A cultivated intelligence causes us to appreciate suffering in others, and consequently to shrink from inflicting it. But from the point of view of the battle of life all this refinement is not progress, but degeneracy, and a nation which has it in excess must inevitably prove the least enduring. Theoretically speaking, a nation which grew up upon the lines of 'culture' ought sooner or later to be submerged in a sea of barbarism, and history, so far as we can read it, bears out this view.

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It is a favourite article of faith with many that progress is just beginning ; that the human race has hitherto been passing through its dark age ; and that it is only now emerging into the light of day.

Alas ! there is nothing so certain, from a review of such a limited period as history covers, as that human nature through all forms of government remains essentially unchanged. Where we do get a glimpse into the remote civilisations of the past—the Babylonian, for instance—we see men and women of very much the same stature, instincts, and passions as ourselves. In fact, there is no better corrective to these new-fangled theories of progress than a study of the cuneiform literature of the British Museum. How very modern is the story that some of these tablets tell ! Let us take one of these baked-clay documents and decipher its secret. It is the purchase deed of a house in the city or suburb of Borsippa bought by a certain Babylonian on the occasion of his marriage. Other tablets enable us to reconstitute the history of the young couple. They prove childless, but they adopt a son, of whose own marriage subsequently we have a notice. After the death of the purchaser of the house his brother, in default of heirs, claims the property, but the widow contests the claim, and an action at law is entered upon, which happily results in her favour. Is not this just such a story as our own law courts deal with every day ? Yet the Babylonians and their civilisation, as advanced in all essentials as our own, have passed away these three thousand years or more. And still we prate of progress. What will there be to show of our civilisation three thousand years hence ? Probably nothing half so eloquent or instructive as these baked tablets. It does not strike me as

Trade in Ready-made Opinions

at all probable that the enduring tendency of humanity is towards intellectual improvement. Otherwise, why have the several civilisations of former ages disappeared—the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Greek, and the Roman? How many others there may have been who can tell?

People talk about evolution as if it were something that could be observed between to-day and to-morrow. It certainly is not that. In all recorded time we know of no material change in the species. To be sure, it is only several thousand years at most, and what is that to the hundreds of thousands and the millions of years that geology and astronomy speak of? If I might hazard a guess as to the probable course of evolution, I would say that its steps have been geological epochs, and that life remains pretty stationary, until a catastrophe of some sort changes the aspect of nature. I see no proof that the men of any civilisation with which we are acquainted were intellectually inferior to the civilised races of the present day. The Greeks, indeed, must have been much more cultured as a people than we. All that we can boast of is a certain amount of accumulated knowledge in the arts and sciences. But accumulated knowledge does not imply intellectual superiority.

It is quite impossible for some people even to summarise a conversation they have had with a friend. They have no faculty for getting at the marrow of the subject, and presenting that. If you ask them what passed on the occasion, they repeat the conversation textually as far as they recall it. It is all 'what I said' and 'what he said,' endlessly. Opinions they take over ready-made. I am afraid to suggest how many people do that—perhaps all of us in some degree. If

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you take an ordinary intelligent Englishman and compare him with an Oriental of the same intellectual rank, you will find that the two men differ radically upon all sorts of questions—social, ethical, political. Their mental equipment is as varied as their costume. This does not imply that they have argued out everything for themselves and arrived at different conclusions; it means that they have assimilated unconsciously the current thought of their respective communities. In the average middle-class household you will find that the wife has learnt nearly everything she knows from her mother, who in turn obtained her knowledge traditionally, and that the husband's opinions are those of his favourite newspaper. Is it not strange, when you come to think of it, that we Europeans should all be of one mind, practically, with regard to trousers, coats, and hats, while the Chinese should be all of a different mind? The majority of men are as un-inventive in opinion as they are in clothes. The society with which you happen to be in contact creates opinion for you.

The newspaper does a brisk trade in ready-made opinions. So imperative is the demand for these on all sorts of questions that there are high-class weekly reviews published containing nothing but opinions, the reader being assumed to have familiarised himself with the vulgar facts in the course of the week.

That the trade done in opinions is just as flourishing, and at least as useful, as that done in facts or in mere news, seems unquestionable. One might go further and assert that a set of ready-made opinions on politics, art, and literature is a more valuable equipment to the man of the world than the array of undigested facts upon which

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it may happen to be based. The psycho-physiologist will tell you that we are each possessed of an immense store of facts—facts lying beyond the sphere of our consciousness, but liable to be revived at any time in dreams and in various abnormal conditions of the cerebral system. They are of no practical use to us, these facts, merely because they are not coupled up and compounded into some sort of coherent opinion. They are like money locked up in some unprofitable investment, destined never to be realised. The facts of a political situation are usually complicated. So the reader, having cast his eye over these, turns to the leader-columns of his newspaper to learn what to think of them.

How strangely artificial the laws of property have become is illustrated by the fact that while an outcry is raised in many quarters at the tendency of governments to take a bigger and bigger slice out of the property left by wealthy testators, the total eclipse at death of a great intellect is accepted as being entirely in the proper order of things. It may be said that the right of certain people to inherit wealth while others are starving is an injustice created by man-made laws; but surely it is no greater an injustice than the inheritance of brains, which is Nature's doing, though, curiously enough, no reformer complains of that. Nor are brains the only quality that can be inherited by one man in preference to, and indeed, in some cases, at the expense of, another; health, strength, good looks, amiability, and contentment are all in the same category. How can things be equalised? They never have been, never are, and never will be, let us pass what laws we may.

Foreigners do not understand that we have among us a

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party of talk and a party of action—a little England and a big England school of politicians. Side by side they read the circulars of the peace-at-any-price party and the accounts given of the execution done by the Maxim guns among insurgent tribes, and they conclude that we carry on our filibustering under the guise of hypocritical professions of the brotherhood of men. And, by a strange fatality, the voices that are loudest in the press and on the platform are precisely those who least represent the grit and manhood of the English nation. It would seem to be the irony of events that the very people who profess most loudly the brotherhood ideal are those who do most to foster international misunderstanding.

With regard to missionary effort, it may be said to date back about a hundred years; and most of the great proselytising bodies came into existence at a time when every church—nay, each Christian sect—professed, on its own account, the sweeping mediæval doctrine, *Hors le giron de l'église pas de salut*. Without professing to be particularly well-informed about these mysteries, I venture to think that the great majority of enlightened Christians would shrink from applying this doctrine in all its rigour to the millions and millions of heathen who, like the Chinese, have been taught by every authority that they can trust to hold a different faith from ours. Would any dignitary of the English Church assert at the present day that, with the exception of the handful of converts that might be claimed by the Church Missionary Society, all the vast population of the Chinese Empire was doomed to perdition?

The question is one that we are too apt to shirk. We ought, however, frankly to face it, and, according to the answer which our conscience may give, judge of the merits

Curiosities of Conscience

of the missionary work in which a dozen different communions do not shrink, in the face of the heathen, from displaying their jealousies and rivalries. Is every Chinaman, for instance, converted by the Anglican Church 'lost' in the eyes of the Church of Rome, and *vice versâ* ? And, if so, how is the poor proselytised Chinaman who, like Rosa Dartle, merely asks for information, to be reassured as to his ultimate fate ? The truth is that, both in theory and practice, missionary enterprise, as it exists at the present day, requires looking into.

Conscience, like morality, is a habit of mind created by the circumstances of a people or a race, and varying therefore according to circumstances. It is our secret judgment passed upon actions of our own, or intended actions, the standard of right and wrong adopted being that of the majority of the community in which we live. In support of this definition one may point to the difference between the sort of conscience known to the Greek schools, from which the principles of our philosophy are derived, and the conscience of nineteenth-century England. We have incorporated in our modern conscience a deal of Christian doctrine quite foreign to the civilised Pagan mind. Not only is this divergence shown between the ancient Greeks and ourselves : it is discovered in a marked form between ourselves and other civilised communities that have not been subjected to the same course of educational and religious discipline.

Apart from what may be called class conscience—and there is a good deal of that, since a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has no difficulty about killing a house fly, while a City man who would disdain to cheat an errand-boy out of a copper feels himself

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at liberty to rob the widow and the orphan—conscience takes many forms. The practical conscience, which serves the purpose of society, does not extend much beyond questions of property. It is strict with regard to certain aspects of the *meum* and *tuum* problem (not all), and for the rest it is content to ask no questions.

Probably everybody has a conscience of some kind. The inveterate thief or burglar has often been known to be loyal to a 'pal'; and that is certainly a case of conscience. One is more conscientious in certain matters than in others. The important thing is to be conscientious in the way that the community in which you are living prescribes. In matters of sex, the conscience of women is different from that of men—so different that the sexes, I believe, never quite understand each other's point of view. That is doubtless an advantage to both, since it keeps them perpetually interested in each other; but it is also a proof that conscience is a faculty built up in accordance with our social necessities. A woman with a man's conscience would be a monster of depravity. On the other hand, while women are stricter than men on points of 'morality'—using that word in the narrower sense—I have found them curiously deficient in what I may call business principle. A man who feels impelled to reject a bribe of some kind that is offered him—not exactly, it may be, in money, but in kind or in social recognition—need not consult his wife. As likely as not she will say to him, 'Take it, my dear; if you don't, Mr. So-and-so will.'

Every now and again a new set of ideals is preached by fanatical reformers, who would like to take the box-seat on the car of Evolution (if I may be permitted the metaphor) and drive to some goal of their imagining.

Pressure of Population

Unfortunately we have no notion at all as to whither Evolution is tending, whether up or down or roundabout ; so that Right and Wrong are not absolute principles, but merely conventional terms employed with regard to our little necessities as a community. As these necessities vary from time to time, so do our conceptions of Right and Wrong vary. Hence the morality of one age, or even of one country, is not that of another. In the universe at large there is no more Right or Wrong than there is Up or Down or North or South ; everything is relative. The promoters of ideals, religious, social, or political, are constantly laying down lines on which they would like the world to travel, but the world is constantly going its own way obedient to some destiny which the mind of man has not yet grasped. Probably no ethical system could appeal more strongly to our sense of fitness than that of Christianity ; but all the Churches admit by their actions that that system has become in a large measure unworkable. So with other systems, of whatever kind. The world is always outgrowing them as a boy outgrows his clothes.

Whatever may be the case with the individual, it seems probable that pressure of population, such as is bound to come, will be a good thing for the race, since it will lead to a vast weeding-out of the unfit. During all historic time, which is only a flea-bite in the world's existence, man has had a fine run in all quarters of the earth. There has been plenty of room for him, and no scarcity of food. There is still room, and the food difficulty arises only from pressure of population within a small area. Africa will receive in her capacious bosom the European and Asiatic overflow of population for a century or two longer. But

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a time of pressure seems bound to come for the whole world, and when it is no longer a scramble for wealth but a fight for food that convulses society, then the condition of things will be terrible indeed. As the pressure increases, the laws of property will snap and go one by one. It will be impossible for any individual, or group of individuals, to maintain private accumulations of wealth—*i.e.* food—in the face of a starving nation. Morality itself will probably go by the board, on the principle enunciated by the suffering heroine of one of Augier's dramas :—

'Vous ne sauriez pas, n'ayant jamais eu faim,
Qu'on renonce à l'honneur pour un morceau de pain.'

Unless, indeed, Nature has some expedient in reserve, of which at present we have no suspicion, as may very well be the case.

Will the 'prudential check,' which keeps the birth-rate of France almost on a level with the death-rate, and is gradually restricting the increase of population in England also, come to our rescue? It may be doubted. I am inclined to regard the prudential check as a symptom of national degeneracy. To the individual the restriction of families may be a boon; to the nation it is death. For the one essential of a great Power is population, and in this respect France is falling behind in the race year by year.

Note where the inconsistency of human nature comes in! The Frenchman, in his way, is extremely patriotic. He is brave and proud-spirited, and would cheerfully shoulder the heaviest burden for the greater glory of France—that is to say, provided he saw this object immediately in front of him. Frenchmen will do everything for their country, with one exception, and that the

The 'Prudential Check' in France

most important of all—they will not give her population. There they draw the line.

Apparently men care very little at bottom for the interests of posterity, or for the greatness of their country, after they themselves are dead. The Frenchman of to-day would undoubtedly exert himself, if called upon, to recover Alsace and Lorraine. But as to the future of France, what he says in effect is, 'After me, the deluge.' He loves his country, but he will not help her to the extent of burdening himself with three children instead of two.

Philanthropists are always inculcating prudence and thrift. Well, here is one result of their policy. The prudential faculty is sapping the energies of France. If the same forces continue to operate, she will speedily be reduced to a second or third-class power, and at no distant date, perhaps, be swamped by the overflow of population around her and disappear from the map, becoming partly Teutonic and partly Italian—for Italy, as regards population, is still in the actively progressive stage.

Many striking considerations are thus opened up. Of course, it may be contended that the happiness of the individual is of more importance than the welfare of the nation; that the word France, or for that matter England, is a mere geographical abstraction; and that after France as France has become as much a thing of the past as the Holy Roman Empire, the territory so designated will be the home of millions of human beings, as now. But that is not our present way of looking at things, and the time would seem to have come for some of our pet theories in sociology to be revised.

Perhaps the strangest feature of our modern morality is the growth of altruism, which seems a genuine pro-

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duct of the nineteenth century. Family feeling is not altruism ; nor is patriotism. Altruism proper has a much wider range. It takes the form of solicitude for the welfare of other races than one's own, for black men in Africa and yellow men in China, or for a posterity so distant that the sense of blood-relationship ceases to operate. Of course the family feeling is at the very basis of society ; and thereby hangs a consideration of some importance.

It is this : Christianity goes dead against the principle of property ! 'Sell all that thou hast,' we are told, 'and give to the poor.' The doctrine is very plain, and its authority, even from the point of view of the Higher Criticism, I suppose, unimpeachable. Yet the Churches, without exception, have agreed not to act upon it. Must we therefore blame the Churches ? Not at all. Their instinct in the matter is sound. For Christianity could have made no headway in the world without the support of the family ; and the family, there is good reason to believe, originated in the sense of property. Away down in the scale of civilisation the human race lived promiscuously. By and by, as men began to acquire property, in the shape of weapons or boats, they became anxious to identify their offspring to whom they could leave these goods ; and thus gradually the relations of the sexes became more and more exclusive, until marriage in its highest form was evolved. So we are told by the authorities, MacLennan, Lubbock, and others. Could the early promoters of Christianity have realised how much they were indebted to the principle of property which they despised ? I venture to think not.

As to altruism in the proper sense, it is not my view

Altruism

that human nature changes inherently from one generation to another. The man of the oldest Egyptian and Assyrian records was physically the man of to-day, and we have every right to conclude that morally he has remained these thousands of years without appreciable change. The growth of altruism, therefore, must be sought in the special conditions of the time; and I believe these are the growing facilities for travel, and consequently our increased knowledge of other races, primitive or advanced. A hundred and fifty years ago, if a Londoner wanted to go to Paris, he had to make his way to Dover by coach. He had there to charter a fishing-boat to take him across to Calais or Boulogne. He had to wait days until his skipper judged that the passage could be made, and he had then to run the risk of being blown down Channel, and landed at Dieppe or Havre, whence he had again to make his way to his destination by coach—or, more likely, he had to buy a conveyance and a horse, and to follow the Paris route as best he could. What chance was there under such circumstances for two peoples, even near neighbours, to become acquainted with each other? France and England used practically to be at opposite ends of the earth. And this only a century and a-half ago, or even less, since we need go back but to the period when as yet there were no steamboats and no railways.

If our Aryan ancestors travelling westward into Europe had suddenly dropped into the conditions of international life which exist to-day, there would probably have grown up few of the differences in language or nationality that separate Englishman from Frenchman, or Frenchman from German, Hungarian, Greek, Italian, or Spaniard. There would have been one European people only—broken up,

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it may be, into different communities, as in the case of the States of the great American Republic, but practically one race. For the peopling of North America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the modern equivalent of the original Aryan immigration into Europe; and it is owing to the changed conditions under which it was effected that the States of the American Union do not represent so many different peoples and languages.

Now the effect of education is to break down the barriers of race and language, and to make the sufferings of a blackamoor or an almond-eyed heathen appeal to us as keenly as those of our own kith and kin. The sentiment, it will be observed, is not reciprocal. The blackamoor takes the product of our Mansion House subscription without so much as saying 'Thank you.' Nor do we expect his gratitude, since he is only a poor ignorant heathen. Similar reasons operate in making us understand and feel with the lower animals. There are people so constituted that the lash of a whip over a dumb animal's back cuts them like a knife. Very largely this manifestation of sympathy, too, belongs to our own age and our own time, and is the result of education. Of altruism, then, I would say that it is the product of the steamboat, the railway, and, above all, the newspaper. And it is assuredly not a thing that the philosopher or the evolutionist can despise. It is a product of evolution, and may play a large part in the future of the human race in the direction of modifying the, to us, harsher aspects of Darwinism.

Not only Buddhism—which, as regards the number of its adherents, is probably the prevailing faith of the world—but Confucianism, the State religion of China,

Can Science develop a Religion?

and Taouism, an important denomination in that country, are schools of philosophy rather than religions in the Western sense; and as they meet the spiritual wants of the teeming millions of their devotees, the fact has an important bearing on the question as to whether modern science can develop anything like a religion of its own. Nothing is more certain than that, amid the trials of life, humanity feels the need of clinging to ideals, to a something outside or beyond itself which makes for righteousness; it is shown by the variety of religions which have sprung up in the world's history, each accommodated to the intellectual calibre of its adherents. And if there is now among ourselves a dissolution of fundamental beliefs, Society will be false to all human precedent if it does not seek and find a fresh basis for its spiritual aspirations.

At many points Buddhism, which has been the consolation of so large a mass of the human race for over two thousand years, touches the most advanced scientific thought of the time. Is it conceivable that from the doctrine of the pitiless and immutable 'laws' of science there may be developed something like a religious sense answering all the purposes of morality? Possibly so. A 'law' in science is nothing more than the lesson of an ascertained group of facts, which imposes its authority until some superior group is discovered; and science does not fail by such means, not only to make men good citizens, but to promote their individual happiness. In the face of the unknown, reverence and submission there must be. I do not know that the attitude of the materialist in presence of the First Cause can be essentially different from that of the Christian towards the

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Godhead; while happiness, the universal goal, is under all dispensations attainable only by the observance of wise rules of life, the fruit of experience which both the East and West unite in calling morality.

The obvious difficulty in the way of a religion of science is prayer. To whom or to what can the materialist pray? Yet prayer seems to be a necessity of the human mind in its affliction. Even the Buddhist prays, though the object of his adoration—namely, Buddha—has, in theory, ceased to exist, and though the condition hoped for, or aspired to, is understood to be attainable only by individual effort. There is no priesthood in Buddhism, unless the name can be applied to the teachers who read the discourses of Buddha in public assemblies. Every man is, theoretically, his own priest. Moreover, every man has it in him, theoretically, to become a Buddha; this is to say, a mortal who, by dint of virtue, austerity, and knowledge may render nugatory the curse of existence. For what purpose, then, are the prayers of the devout Buddhist offered up? Before the Western student can answer this question, he must recast his whole conception of prayer and of the meaning of those offerings of flowers, fruit, and incense which are daily made to images of Buddha, or at shrines containing his relics. To the Buddhist these things are a mental discipline, the expression of a desire to emulate the most exemplary of men, to attain to the most perfect rule of life. It may be questioned whether certain forms of modern Christianity, which in practice treat many of the axioms of the Sermon on the Mount as purely academic, are much more than this; and since we are invited by circumstances to consider the possibility of a religion of science arising, it

Does Evolution require its Prophet?

is conceivable that the old formula may insensibly glide into the new upon the lines above indicated. In the event of this dream being realised, the theory of life would not alone change; the practice of it would necessarily undergo some modification. A scientific *régime* would diminish the conception of the sacredness of life, as Buddhism actually does among Orientals; and this in turn might lead to the placing of some material check upon the growth of population, perhaps the gravest of the evils with which society is threatened. But no new faith can be evolved without a preacher.

It is a strange want on the part of humanity, that of a personality of some kind to venerate. But it exists, and is as well-defined in politics, for instance, as in religion. An abstract principle must be embodied in a man before it can be trusted to stir up popular enthusiasm. 'Gladstone' has been a greater cry than Home Rule. Observe how these poor Hindoos fashion their gods in their own image. And how much does Christianity owe to the winning personality of its Founder! The philosophical abstractions of Comtism have never taken hold of the popular mind. So the religion of science, too, if it is to become a force in the world, needs its preacher, its Buddha, to whose name or memory men can offer homage. I confess I see no scientific personality who can even distantly fulfil this requirement. Darwin marked an epoch in modern thought; but his system has already been impaired by criticism. Some greater generalisation than his is obviously needed to cover the whole field of intellectual activity; but, perhaps, as science is still young, that may come. The hour generally brings with it the man.

CHAPTER IX

Is Education overrated?—Environment and Opportunity—Nelson, Napoleon, and Wellington—Our Devotion to ‘Exams.’—Napoleon’s Generals judged by the Sandhurst Standard—Chinese Methods—The Battle of Life—Innate Qualities—Conditions of Success—In the Army, at the Bar, in Medicine—Value of Reading.

NEXT to a debased franchise, education is the hope of the democracy. The pecuniary sacrifices that democratic communities make for the education of their members are astonishing. What is more, men of the highest intelligence proclaim an almost passionate belief in the importance of education for the masses, and exert themselves to their utmost capacity to make that belief prevail. I do not suppose that any public man dare stand up in public at the present time and question the possibility of education effecting all the marvels claimed for it. He would be afraid of being stoned. The word ‘education’ has become a sort of shibboleth of respectability and propriety, the inability to pronounce which, with unction and conviction, proclaims one a sort of social outcast, an enemy of mankind, or at least of the masses.

Yet on what evidence does the argument for education as a universal boon rest? I take it that a boon is something that conduces to happiness, and that no movement which does not conduce to happiness is worth promoting. Does education, however, produce happiness? It is a

Knowledge and Happiness

thesis extremely difficult to maintain in the face of the facts as they present themselves to the unbiassed observer. For your philosopher, who has exhausted the sources of human knowledge, and who still ponders vainly over the inscrutable mystery of things, does not strike one as a particularly happy being in comparison with the illiterate rustic, who basks in the sun or swings away his time idly on a gate. If this seems a questionable comparison, let us go one step further—to the case of the cattle browsing in the meadow, the cat purring on the hearth, the dog watching his master's eye. Is there happiness there or not? Surely the answer must be 'Yes'; and perhaps as we descend the scale of animated nature, happiness becomes more and more assured.

If so, what becomes of the contention that knowledge and happiness are interchangeable terms? The more one knows, the more one is conscious of how much there remains to be known. It may be said that the knowledge of the philosopher is not exactly what is implied by education in the statesman's sense. But what is this education that one hears so much of? In discussing a case, it is always well to begin, if possible, by agreeing with your opponent upon your premises. I should like to do so here—to be quite frank as to what is meant by 'education.' But no definition of the word is possible. The people who clamour most loudly for 'education' do not know exactly what they want. Evidently it is something more than the three R.'s—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Shall I be wrong in assuming that the term is understood to cover poetry, art, history, and a smattering of a variety of the sciences from botany upwards? Government departments, inspectors, parents, are content

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if these things are crammed down the throats of a certain number of children, without the smallest regard to the capacity of the pupil, either for assimilating his studies or turning them to practical account in the battle of life. Now, for a very large proportion of the work of the world—for the work of the carpenter at his bench, the shoemaker at his last, the blacksmith at his forge, the shopman at his counter, the clerk at his desk, there is no need to look beyond, or to know anything beyond, the actualities of the moment. Some of the finest work in the world was done in bygone ages, while as yet popular education was unknown; it was done by men who had no education whatever, except what they had gained by an apprenticeship to their calling—education which had nothing to do with books. It is only in a small proportion of cases, I venture to think, that education of any but the most elementary kind can be of practical use to its recipients. Nature besides has her own way of correcting matters. It is vain to attempt to pour a quart into a pint pot; and if you cram a boy with education which he does not want, it simply goes down the sink. On the other hand, if a boy has natural aptitude for learning, he will acquire it, no matter in what circumstances he may be placed—the lives of great men are rich in examples of that kind. And here I may beg the reader not to misunderstand me. I am not against education itself, but only against that indiscriminate application of it which is the craze of the day. What is gained, for example, by insisting that a boy with no ear shall go through a curriculum of music, or that a colour-blind person shall be taught painting?

Not alone by ignorant people is the word education pronounced with reverence. It is a fetish of the politicians

Effect of Surroundings

on both sides of the House, so much so that the entrance to every branch of Government employment, even that of fighting, lies through a scholastic 'exam.' What the process amounts to in many cases is this—that we examine a candidate in one branch of knowledge when we require his services in another. We exact mathematics, say, from a post-office employé, chemistry from a bank clerk, trigonometry from a soldier, or generally technical cramming of some sort, when we want character, 'grit,' courage, promptitude in action, and so on. More and more the advocates of education seem to grow enamoured of their theory that the child is born into the world with a set of faculties that can be shaped to anything. Living proof to the contrary stares them in the face every day, but they will not see it. Look at the shoals of young men turned out by the universities of this country every year. They have had practically the same education, the same environment, but they are nevertheless possessed of the most diverse aptitudes and tastes. Take the family circle! Here education and environment are for all the boys and girls of the family absolutely identical. Yet one member turns out one way, and another, another. There may be a black sheep in the fold who has had the same chances as the rest. If all happened to be cast in that mould, education would stand confessed a failure, and the mould is Nature's affair, not the schoolmaster's. Education is a weapon which proves generally useful, but the capacity for turning it to account is inborn. There may be potential Nelsons in the navy at the present moment. But if there are, they are most assuredly not the products of the naval curriculum.

What goes to the making of a Nelson? Intuitive per-

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ception of the enemy's intentions, of his strength, of his limitations, of his difficulties; caution in his dispositions, combined with quickness of judgment in seizing upon the enemy's weak point, and energy enough, together with a sufficient disregard for human life, to be able to turn an almost momentary advantage to account! All those qualities, I should say, were needed in a Nelson, and others less easy to define. Some of them could only be possessed by a mind of a mathematical turn, skilful in weighing probabilities and in calculating the effects of movements. Of book learning there need be none. Of that command of words, and that sense of rhyme and rhythm, which are the fundamentals of the poet and the *littérateur*, there need be no more than would suffice for the writing of a despatch to the Admiralty. Yet it may be doubted whether, with the ideas that now prevail, a Government would dare commission for active service an admiral, say, who could not be trusted to spell, and certainly there were features of Nelson's life that would not be accepted now—no, not if the next battle of Trafalgar were to be lost in consequence. I allude to his public *liaison* with the notorious Lady Hamilton, otherwise Emma, the ex-domestic servant. If it does nothing else, this *liaison* proves conclusively the one-sided character of genius. There was no romance in it except on Nelson's side; for the notorious Emma, of whom twenty portraits by Romney are extant, had been through many hands before she came to those of the hero of Trafalgar, or to be strictly exact in a chronological sense, the hero of the Battle of the Nile, for it was on his return from that great victory that Lady Hamilton, then the wife of the English Ambassador at Naples, 'fell on his breast in a paroxysm of hysterical rapture.' Extreme beauty, winning

The Modern Nelson

manners, and shady antecedents were the characteristics that Emma brought into the *liaison*, and for the naval hero they were enough, and more than enough. He remained faithful to his enchantress till his death. To be sure, the period was not long, only seven years, during nearly the whole of which Nelson was at sea. After his meeting with Lady Hamilton he met his wife only once, when at the end of a stormy scene they parted for good. With the siren, however, his correspondence was frequent, and couched in the most adoring vein. In the face of this scandal Nelson was not only promoted, but was commissioned by the Government to undertake the defence of the English coast in view of the preparations for invasion then being made by Napoleon. I wonder whether a Government of our own day would have this hardihood. Would they dare place in a post of honour a person whom Mrs. Grundy could not possibly invite to an evening party? I think not. Other times, other manners. What we should do would be to select for the defence of England a respectable married man, who might lose his Trafalgar, but who could be trusted to keep the seventh commandment.

It is curious to note that after Nelson had won his spurs—if a naval officer can be said to do so—though only in a small way, he spent no less than five years in retirement, during which he frequently applied in vain for employment. The outbreak of the war with France was his great opportunity. But for that, England would never have known that she possessed the great admiral that she did, in the rather narrow-chested, ailing, far from strong young naval officer who was destined to carry her flag to its highest glory. Of course, if the Government of that time had been of the same way of thinking with ours, they would have been

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concerning themselves with 'exams.' of one kind and another, at one of which the future hero of Trafalgar would very likely have been plucked.

Given the requisite mental endowment, nothing develops the great naval or military commander so surely as service in what is properly the business of his life, namely, war. The long spell of war upon which this country entered a little over a hundred years ago, disclosed a great amount of military and naval capacity without any reference to scholastic matters at all. Napoleon, who unquestionably had a genius for war, never thought of asking his generals whether they were proficient in the three R.'s. Many of these worthies, the sons of small tradesmen and shopkeepers, but afterwards created princes and dukes, must have left a good deal to be desired, I fear, from the point of view of the Board School inspector. Yet they too developed some of the military genius of their master. Would we had the secret at Sandhurst! The whole history of the great struggle that took place between France and England at the beginning of the century teaches us one lesson, which, however, we have not learned—the vanity of bookish theoric. Wellington himself was a dull and careless scholar, and showed no aptitude for the science of war until he was thirty years of age.

The examiners of candidates for the army are making their meshes so fine that, presently, only the bookworms will be able to get through, and it is permissible to doubt whether a thin red line of bookworms would have withstood the charge of the Russian cavalry at Inkerman. Of Napoleon's brilliant staff of military commanders, probably not one would have passed at Sandhurst. Ney, the most

Napoleon's Generals

dashing soldier of them all, was a cooper's son, and entered the army as a private. Every step of his promotion was earned, not by the study of books, but by some daring act in the field, where coolness and judgment, as well as personal courage, were required. The most distinguished title conferred upon him by Napoleon was that of *le brave des braves*. It is not a qualification to be found, I believe, in the books of our military examiners. Soult again, whose dispositions in the field Wellington never liked because they gave him so much inconvenience, began his military career as a private, and got on so slowly at first that after six years' service he was still only a sergeant. By such brilliant tactics did he meet the consummate strategy of Wellington in the Peninsula, however, and not seldom with inferior forces, that when in after years he was sent to this country as French Ambassador he was received with marked honours by the nation, and by nobody more than Wellington himself. But Soult could not have passed the Woolwich examination. Masséna, the greatest of all Napoleon's marshals, began life as a cabin boy, and served fourteen years in the Sardinian army, but left it because his plebeian birth precluded him from promotion. Under Napoleon he had his chance. Would he have found it at Sandhurst, where they have no means of detecting in the cadet what was Masséna's strong point in tactics, namely, quickness and fertility in resource, combined with indefatigable pluck?

Of the folly of examining men for one set of faculties when you want another, there could not be a better example than China. It is competitive examination which has been the ruin of that crumbling Empire. Throughout China every public post, from the highest to the lowest, has for

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generations been won by dint of the candidates passing an examination in the Chinese classics, mostly written by sages who flourished from one to three thousand years ago. As the examinations are constantly going on in all parts of the Chinese empire, and are conducted with a strictness and an impartiality which the Celestial exhibits in nothing else, we may take it that the best practical results of the system are secured. And what are they? Inefficiency and corruption throughout the entire public service of China. The examination brings to the front one sort of man, while it is a totally different sort that is wanted.

The strangest circumstance in connection with the equality theory is, that while as a theory it is allowed to dominate all our political developments, we never carry it out in our daily lives. The comparative modesty of the trade union wage, which is not that at which a working-class leader would expect either a P.R.A. or a Lord Chief Justice to work, is a proof of what I say; but the State itself does not act logically in this matter, otherwise to what end are the much-cherished competitive examinations that obtain in the Government services? If one man is as good as another, or one woman, why is not a Government appointment given to the first comer? When Democracy wields full power in this country, it must either prove untrue to itself or abolish the competitive examination. To know how a thing ought to be done is not necessarily to be able to do it. For instance, I imagine I know pretty well what constitutes good generalship in the field. I can feel Napoleon's prodigious memory for military detail, his intuitive mathematical conception of the effect of certain combinations, and of the time consumed in marches and movements. I can realise his utter indifference to human

Official 'Exams.'

life, his callousness in ordering a body of men to storm a position in which three-fourths of them must bite the dust. But I could no more be Napoleon than I could be a successful juggler. Whatever might be the case with the mathematical combinations, when it came to storming a position I should involuntarily think of the wives and mothers of the men to be sacrificed—I should hesitate to give the order, and the day would be lost. A young man in spectacles may learn the whole theory of war, and yet be totally unable to carry it into practice. Of this inability, however, the professional examiner at Sandhurst would take no note. So with civil appointments of all kinds. Knowledge is nothing without the ability to apply it, and that cannot be imparted in any classroom, but must be developed by the necessities of the struggle for life. For almost any public position whatever, excellence in a technical 'exam.' does not, and cannot, disclose one-half the qualities required.

What is of value to a youth is the mental organisation which enables him to do well in the world ; but that he does not acquire at school. In fact, he takes it to school with him the first day ; it is his from the hour of his birth ; and it is a chance whether the qualities which are destined to tell in his after life are those which happen to shine at school. If the surroundings are favourable to the young man's organisation, he succeeds ; if not, not. Could the schools fashion a great poet, a great painter, or a great musician out of a lad who had no native capacity for literature or art ? Most assuredly not. There is a little knack, a little skill, that may be acquired, though even that must rest upon natural capacity. Wagner never succeeded in becoming a passable player of the piano. A

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scholastic 'exam.' may be warranted to discover which youth in a class has absorbed most of the learning set before that class. As to the use he may make of his gains in after life it proves nothing. Experience has conclusively proved that the pupil who takes first prize at school is not necessarily the best fitted of all candidates for a post of honour and difficulty in the outer world ; and naturally so, since the requirements in each case are totally distinct. Yet we are constantly proceeding upon the assumption that excellence in one thing implies excellence in another. We are for ever screwing up the 'exams.' for the public services ; but all this does is to check the inflow of candidates, a result which could be equally well attained by prescribing a chest measurement or eliminating all aspirants with flat feet or red hair. If we had any sense of humour as a nation, we could not tolerate for the humblest employés of the Post Office a system of examination under which the Postmaster-General, not to say the Prime Minister himself, would inevitably be 'plucked.'

Whether in intellect or athletics, it is the innate gift that tells, and this is Nature's great guarantee that any artificial distribution of honours or favours which human society may devise will never be real or effective. Society may conspire to give a man wealth and title—it often does—but if he has a weak frame, a wretched digestion, a puny mind, a cowardly disposition, he remains a poor, unhappy creature after all. So if you take a person of inadequate physique and train him to this or that form of athletics, he will never be fit to cope with an iron-limbed, supple-sinewed child of Nature. All that education does, or can do, is to improve the natural faculty ; it can never supply it, any more than a pair of spectacles will enable a

The World's Test

man who has no eyes to see. The native ability to which I pin my faith as the great factor in worldly success always knows how to acquire such education as it needs. Let it not for a moment be imagined that I am against education. Far from it! Education is a capital accessory; but unless there is the incommunicable, unteachable native ability behind it, it is worthless as a factor in worldly success.

By education, of course, in this sense, I mean book education. It is incredible what a number of people one meets in the highest places whose knowledge of books is of the most limited order. The Harley Street physician, the busy Q.C., the city magnate, the conspicuous politician, the contractor. What is the sum of their book knowledge? Really very little. They have no time to study literature; instinctively they have discovered that they would gain nothing by consulting things in print, that is to say, learning at second hand some writer's interpretation of a passage in the book of life, in which they are themselves proficient readers.

The flaw in the education argument is the assumption that education produces those qualities of mind that the world esteems. One boy will be found in a class learning diligently, and another unable to assimilate anything at all from his books. That is a question of native endowment. In due time both boys leave school—the one still with a taste for reading, the other with latent forces of an unknown character. The reading boy settles down into a bookworm, and is happy in obtaining a post as librarian or private secretary. If of a scientific turn, he may devote himself to the study of the forehead of the carp, or the distribution of chlorophyll in the leaves of the shamrock, and read papers at meetings of learned societies. The dull boy

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turns out to be possessed of courage and daring, combined with ascendancy over his fellow-men, and becomes a famous administrator—one of those men of action who have helped to make England great. Now, abolish schools and ‘exams.,’ and these two boys would still evolve upon their natural lines, the fact being that in life, character—in-born character—is everything, and accessories little or nothing.

The ‘exam.’ we most of all require is one which has not yet found a place in any school or college curriculum, though we most of us encounter it later in our career, some to be hopelessly ‘plucked,’ others to pass triumphantly. I mean an examination in the qualities most conducive to success in the various walks of life. Let us take a practical example. The late Sir Frank Lockwood was one of the most brilliant and successful men at the bar, but his special gifts were not of the kind useful to him in his preliminary examination. Law happens to be just one of those things that a great advocate stands least in need of. Once at the bar and in practice, the man cut out by nature for an advocate’s career will very soon pick up all the law he requires, *ambulando*. What distinguished Lockwood among his fellows was an imposing presence, a musical and impressive voice, commanding and expressive gesture, quickness of apprehension, humour, geniality, industry,—all qualities of which no examiner takes account.

One knows men at the bar, Lockwood’s contemporaries, who passed their examination with flying colours, but who have achieved no success. They earn a bare livelihood by consultation work in chambers, but not a tithe, not a twentieth, not a fortieth part of Lockwood’s income.

Professional Success

Lucky are they, indeed, to be able to do that! There are many others, equally well versed in the law, who earn nothing at all. They are men precluded by nature from cutting a successful figure at the Bar. They have no voice, no readiness, no presence. They would merely bore a jury and worry a judge! But why did not the examiners tell them so?

Take doctors again! Do you suppose that passing as a surgeon, or even as a M.D., necessarily qualifies a man to be a popular practitioner? I have in my mind not a few examples to the contrary—men who with the highest nominal attainments are buried out of sight in small practices, where they barely contrive to make ends meet. A doctor requires to be able to put a patient at his ease and to inspire confidence. He must speak dogmatically and act with promptitude; then his patients believe in him. If he vacillates, looks perplexed, confesses (what may be perfectly true) that he does not quite understand the case, but that he will experiment with one remedy or another until he chances upon the right one, he will never make a favourable impression.

More than the woman, the doctor who hesitates is lost. For certain classes of practice a 'good bedside manner' and plenty of conversation are valuable gifts. The cheerful doctor is infinitely preferred to one equally skilful who enters the sickroom with the visage of an undertaker. But which of these various qualities is made the test of an 'exam.,' though they are all of them as essential to successful treatment as an acquaintance with the latest discovery in bacteriology? For a clergyman, is there any gift more valuable than attractive preaching? That this is not one of the theological tests we know from the

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number of poor preachers to be found in the Church. In nine cases out of ten the sermon is a bore. The administrative faculty is also desirable in a parochial clergyman, but that again is not exacted.

Everywhere the same story. We should like to get good looks, civility, taste, neatness, and height in the young ladies who serve in the Post Office, but, alas! the examiners have given no thought to these things. Meanwhile Nature calmly pursues her own course. After our futile official examination, the real struggle in the professions begin; and it is barristers like Lockwood, and pushing doctors with capital and assurance enough to set up in Harley Street, who come to the front. If the best men always did in the long run win, there would not be so much reason to complain; but the 'exam.' frequently pushes the wrong man forward, and in the public service especially incalculable harm may be done before the mistake is repaired, if repaired it ever is. Think of the harm that an incapable general might do in the field before his mistakes demonstrated his unfitness!

Reading, which many would-be public benefactors seek to encourage, is itself a practice of questionable value. Let us not forget that polished and cultured civilisations, antecedent to ours, were built up without any expenditure of printer's ink at all, and that the world went very well then, probably better than it does now. Men lived and loved, and the generations came and went, as they still do, like the leaves of the forest. Not one-hundredth part of the books poured forth from the press require to be read by any human being. As the wisest man can tell all he knows in a quarter of an hour, the amount of genuine information to be derived from books lies within very

Reading

small compass. By far the greater part of the reading done is indulged in by way of pastime. It is a fashion of the day. When it is more than that, it is a vice, like dram-drinking or cigarette-smoking, which people would be better without.

CHAPTER X

The Equality Cry—Popular Voting—Reason and Emotion in Politics—Political Tradition—Democracy and its Leaders—‘The Swing of the Pendulum’—Too Much Legislating—The Governing Cliques—Political Corruption—The State as Employer—The Value of a Vote—*Might v. Right*—The ‘Haves’ and ‘Not Haves’—Futility of Argument—The Farce of Parliamentary Debate—Log-rolling.

EQUALITY is the cry of all democracies. Yet nothing is plainer than that Nature has set her canons against equality by making all created things unequal. Inequality between the members of each species is the basis of the whole theory of evolution, which, according to our present thinking, is the master-principle of the universe. Without inequality, or what is the same thing, variety, there could have been no advance in species. In the street, in the workshop, among the members of one’s own family, where does equality declare itself? There is no equality in Nature, no equality either of intellect, or stature, or muscle, or nerve, and the attempt to introduce a political or social equality is the maddest scheme ever hatched out of Bedlam. What is responsible for the inequality that at present exists but the inherent nature of things? If men had been created equal, they would have remained equal, and the surest prophecy that could be made is this—that if Socialism were introduced to-morrow it would simply mean a cataclysm in which the strongest would

The Equality Superstition

again come to the surface. The magnitude of this political superstition is indeed amazing, especially when one reflects that while it is extolled as the true principle of democratic government, no human being, not even a democrat, thinks of applying it in private life. If there ought to be equal political power, why not equal wages; and why has not Nature taken the cue by making all men of equal height, weight, and capacity? But it is useless to argue a question in which reason is all on one side. Whence comes this wonderful fiction of equality that governs all modern political programmes? Not, assuredly, from the East, where it is not in the least understood by any class of people. I imagine that, though first advocated by such eminent sceptics as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tom Paine, it is based upon some misreading of the doctrines of Christianity. Be that as it may, the superstition is probably so deeply wrought into the web and woof of political thought that nothing but revolution will ever shake it out of us.

The popular vote which makes and unmakes Governments is based upon this strange doctrine that what is not necessarily wise or true when uttered by one person becomes so when reiterated by a thousand or ten thousand people of exactly the same degree of intelligence and information. What John Smith says in the market-place matters nothing; but bring up a hundred thousand John Smiths, who shall not even think out anything for themselves, but who shall repeat by rote something written down for them to say—in other words, run a party ticket, and then you have the great *vox populi*, which some translate as the *vox Dei*. This idea nine-tenths of the human race have not yet taken up, and we ourselves

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never resort to the principle in any matter vitally affecting our interests. It is only upon public questions which are at once everybody's business and nobody's business, that we ever think of taking a vote. What merchant having a delicate matter to decide, involving thousands of pounds, would dream of calling his clerks or shopmen together down to the messenger at the door, and explaining the situation to them in a necessarily imperfect speech, taking their verdict, by which he would be bound to abide, in the form of Yes or No? Yet this is practically what we do with regard to public administration, and the man at the door has just the same voting power as the chief cashier or even the master himself. However various the questions at issue may be, mark you! the voter can only say Yes or No, and it is then for the master to interpret these monosyllabic declarations.

It may be doubted whether in a political contest reason is not the smallest of the influences at work. Politics are a matter of feeling rather than reason. Colours, emblems, the mere externals of a political contest, are enough to stir up and intensify enthusiasm; and this mood having once seized upon a section of the public, all the arguments of the other side serve but to confirm them in it. The wave of feeling will even carry away boys at school, who certainly cannot be accused of deep political designs one way or the other. Nobody can help being thrilled by the cheers or the execrations of a crowd, and unless the elector has deeply rooted convictions of his own he will almost necessarily be attracted by the party that does the loudest shouting.

If, then, my theory is correct, the art of winning an election is to start the wave of feeling, that picks up and

Reason and Feeling

carries along with it the mass of hesitating voters, and I believe the section of the electorate with whom the initiative rests is really very small; also that its efforts are immensely favoured by the sportsmanlike tendency of the English elector to let the Opposition have a chance. There is nothing particularly new in my discovery. As Rabelais long ago pointed out, man is as imitative an animal as a sheep. Let it once be determined how the crowd is going, and the chances are the man on the fence will get down and go with it, and what influences the crowd more than any other consideration is the love of alternation—the letting each party in turn have its innings.

Clearly, the determining influence in an election is not reason, but feeling; and, of course, feeling may be enlisted in favour of any cause you can name. In other words, the popular vote is usually given under a temporary impulse of some kind which has nothing to do with argument, or even with right or wrong. That is why no country of any importance has successfully dispensed with a Second Chamber, or with some system of time-check which restrains the impetuosity of a popularly elected assembly. It is absolutely necessary to give the people time to see the error of their ways, so that they may revise their opinion before much harm is done.

For how are you to control feeling? It is something wholly independent of fact, reason, or expediency. Slavery is an ugly institution. Yet this country, at the time of the American Civil War, was all on the side of the slave-owning States. That was how the wave of public feeling happened to run. It was started by the Lancashire cotton-spinners, who were ruined by the blockade of the Confederate ports, and without a shred of fact or argu-

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ment or reason or humanity to support it, it swept over the whole country, carrying some very eminent philanthropists on its crest. Then the people of England, had their vote been taken on the subject, would have solemnly affirmed the principle of slavery. To-day they would as solemnly affirm the contrary, just because feeling happens so to run. It is feeling, always feeling—never reason—that sways the average elector; and feeling is just as capricious as taste.

Another circumstance to be noted in opposition to the theory of reason is the force of tradition in certain constituencies. There are certain boroughs that can safely be reckoned upon to be Liberal and others Tory. It is the jargon of politics to say that such and such a seat is 'safe' for one party or the other. Why is it safe? Solely by dint of tradition; for the inhabitants of the so-called Liberal constituency are exactly the same sort of people as those of the Tory constituency, belonging to the same social classes, and having the same degree of education, the same aptitudes, the same experience of life, the same patriotism.

If it were the practice of political leaders to take No for an answer from the constituencies, the mischief of the party cry would be less than it is. But the swing of the pendulum is one of the features of the parliamentary system. Discredited in Parliament, an idea is shelved for a few years. Properly speaking, it ought no more to be heard of. But when the country gets tired of the Ministry, and the Opposition are going to have their turn, out comes the idea again. Political leaders never wait nowadays for the people to speak. They make it their business to invent popular grievances, and to lay them

The Restlessness of Democracy

before the people with a request for a mandate to remedy them. In the jargon of politics, they go to the country with a 'cry.' Probably, in nine cases out of ten, there is no opinion in the average elector's mind that is not first put there by the candidate or the political organisation working in his interest.

Apparently, then, we are condemned by the conditions of the democratic system to be always on the move, legislating, amending, repealing, and legislating again. Such a thing as letting well alone or frankly recognising that the human mind must always be straining after the unattainable is unknown. To a philosophic Oriental, whose theory of life is that the world essentially does not change, the fussy hive of politicians constantly buzzing at Westminster must be a strange, indeed hardly a rational, spectacle. Just think of the row of Ministers on the Treasury bench, each charged to the muzzle with legislative projects! Think of the row of ex-Ministers on the front Opposition bench, each with rival projects, and prepared to dispute the validity of those of the Government. Being in office on the understanding that they must do something, as otherwise the brute would get restive, Ministers propose certain extravagant measures—the more extravagant the better—and if Democracy brays assent they proceed to carry them out, regardless of experience and of the advice of wise and disinterested men, and solely with the view of currying favour with the hydra-headed.

Such I believe to be the inward and true history of the restlessness shown in democratic politics. There is the constant desire for change, because it is hoped that change will bring some remedy for the really incurable ills of human nature. The change is tried, but the remedy comes

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not. Will the day ever arrive when the democracy, having exhausted its Programmes, will fold its arms with resignation, and say, 'It is no good trying any more to improve society; man's lot is to suffer. We must make the best of things as they are'? So pacific a solution of the democratic programme is, I fear, impossible, if only because it is human nature to refuse to be taught by the experience of past generations, and to insist upon solving all the old problems of life *de novo*. It is much more probable that things will go from bad to worse until they are arrested on this side of anarchy by a strong and saving hand.

Government by the people, then, resolves itself into government by a few interested cliques, who profess to talk in the name of the people, but who really put forward ideas of their own, and get the unthinking populace to support them. You may change your political system, but the principles of human nature remain ever the same. No more than the Greek helot has the working man time to consider the affairs of the State. All his energies are consumed in the task of earning a livelihood. Even as regards his trade affairs he puts out his thinking to be done by others, as people of a higher social grade put out the family washing. This, I dare say, many people of all classes do. Thinking in the higher sense of the word—that is, considering matters other than those with which we have to do in our daily lives, revolving questions that are not concerned with our immediate wants—is a much rarer function than one is apt to suppose.

As to the see-saw of public opinion; if you found a man deciding a question one way to-day, another way to-morrow, then reverting to his former opinion the

Is Legislation a Necessity?

following week, only to abandon it the next time of asking, the circumstances meanwhile remaining the same, except that he was being argued with by different sets of self-seeking controversialists, wouldn't you be justified in saying that he did not know his own mind, that his opinion was really not worth having, and that it would be better to give up the farce of consulting him at all? Wouldn't it be better to treat him as doctors treat their valetudinarian patients—that is to say, give him a little harmless medicine from time to time and let him grow out of his fancies? So much for the sovereign people and their verdict at the polls! All these programmes *en l'air*, these strings of artificial demands invented by the so-called leaders of the people, these policies of wood painted to look like iron—don't you find it difficult to regard them with patience? It is inconceivable that the fussy element in politics, this transparent party-manœuvring, this harassing game between the outs and the ins, should be an enduring concomitant of civilisation.

I suppose it would never enter the mind of the modern Radical or Conservative that a nation or a people could go on, say, for five hundred years at a stretch without legislation of any kind. Yet nations have done that, and are doing it, and I do not suppose that their balance of happiness is less than ours. That the standard of comfort for all classes in this country is higher than it used to be there is little doubt, though it is by no means easy for one generation to put itself in the shoes of another. The assumption is that the improvement, if any, is due to legislation. This I am very much disposed to question. Changes take place, but only when the class or the community affected is ripe for them. Then they come about

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naturally. A great deal of legislation has been undertaken in the interests of the working classes, and by a too facile process of reasoning a chain of causes and effects is evolved. But I will take a class for whom nothing has been done in the way of legislation, but who nevertheless during the last hundred years have vastly improved their social position—I mean men of letters, including in that elastic term writers for the stage. Formerly, the literary man had absolutely to beg for a livelihood. He was no better than a mendicant, and received just the corresponding amount of social consideration ; and it is the fact that even Shakespeare's page is defaced by a fulsome eulogy of a member of the upper classes of the period, whose name survives only because the illustrious author of *Venus and Adonis* ventured humbly to solicit his patronage. Now it is the man of letters who sits in high places, and who gathers up his skirts as the mere city merchant passes by, and who makes his thousands of pounds where formerly he made his tens, the quality of the work being, on the most favourable estimate, the same. Do the literary class owe this change in their circumstances to legislation ? Have their wrongs ever been the theme of an election cry ? Not at all ! Circumstances, more particularly the spread of education, have given them strength, and they have used it for their own advantage.

As a proof of the predominance of feeling rather than reason in the conduct of public affairs, note how largely the mood of the moment is responsible for the interest that the public may manifest in any given question. Bad sanitation, I dare say, though infinitely less destructive to life than it used to be in the palmy days of pestilence, kills off a good many people in this country every year

The Governing Class

before their time. Let us say some thousands, old and young, male and female. Suppose that, instead of dying in accordance with the formulæ of the Registrar-General, the victims were blown up with dynamite as the result of a conspiracy between the heads of the Local Government Board and an army of inspectors and medical officers throughout the country. What would the outcry be? Nevertheless, the same culpable sacrifice of life is regularly made in another form, and nobody marks it, though the victims, were they given the choice, would probably prefer a short and sharp annihilation to the lingering agonies of the ordinary death-bed.

In this country, happily, although living under a democracy, we are still to a great extent in the hands of a land-owning, titled, wealthy governing class, and in this respect there is little or nothing to choose between Liberal and Conservative Ministries. The governing cliques wear the aspect of a great family party, and in fact are more or less connected by the ties of blood or marriage, the whole living on such terms of intimacy that the wives call each other by their Christian names while the younger men are 'Bobby,' 'Jack,' or 'Dolly.' The outsider who would get into this charmed circle must evidently be a man of unusual ability and force of character, and wealthy to boot. How long this Society tone will be given to the higher politics it is impossible to say. There is a strong Radical objection taken to a Parliament of rich men. Accordingly there is talk of throwing the expense of elections upon the exchequer, and paying elected members an official salary of some hundreds a year. Avowedly the object in view is to enable the poorest man—an agricultural labourer, if need be, or a docker—to find his way

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into Parliament, and to live there in comparative affluence so long as his mandate lasts. Not only so, but to count for as much in a division on the most vital questions of imperial concern as the wisest and best and most experienced heads in the country. Such a theory of government is so curious a subversion of the practice of sensible men in their own affairs that if it were suddenly presented to us as a new idea in some such speculation as More's *Utopia* or Butler's *Erewhon* it would be accepted as capital burlesque. What merchant, say, having enormous interests in the East or the West, would select as his adviser an illiterate labouring-man, the whole of whose meagre faculties up to that time had been absorbed by the problem of earning five-and-twenty shillings a week? No, no; the question in that light is not debatable, though the analogy between the case supposed and that of the Radical demand for paid representation is perfect.

Under a Democracy corruption is inevitable. A moment's reflection will show that this must be so. Everybody admits that judges, in order to be kept honest, must be highly paid and appointed for life. They are a superior set of men—far superior to the ruck of politicians—but experience shows that there is only one way of making them incorruptible; namely, by making it not worth their while to be corrupted. In bankrupt countries where payment of salaries is uncertain, or where supreme power may at any moment be seized by some adventurer, the judges, despite the theoretical guarantees that hedge them in, remain corrupt. Now, the wielding of political influence in a legislative chamber is just as full of danger from the point of view of bribery as the dispensing of justice, because in a thousand ways the legislator, be he

Sordid Interests

member of Parliament or simple County Councillor, can make himself serviceable or obnoxious to rich men and powerful syndicates. His draconian virtue may hold out for a time against all assaults; but in the end, if he is poor, and if his wife is ambitious, with rich prizes dangled before his greedy eyes, he will succumb—he must, it is only in human nature that he should. Obviously we cannot deal with our legislators as we do with our judges. We cannot pay them from £5000 to £10,000 a year, and appoint them for life—though I am not sure that that would not be the lesser of two evils. The fair equivalent in the political world is that we should have a wealthy governing class, such as we had for generations in England prior to the Reform Bill, and such as we still have to a limited extent.

By a governing class I mean a body of men who, by descent and inherited fortune, are placed, like the judges, above the vulgar temptation of enriching themselves while they have the chance, and who, by their established social rank, acquire an *esprit de corps* that still further removes them from bribery, just as an officer in a crack regiment is saved by his position from anything like cowardice. In the aristocratic code of honour there is plenty of room for wrong-doing, no doubt, and a governing class will breed as many fools as any other. But at least the sordid money interest is not their besetting weakness. A ‘gentleman,’ to adopt the cant phrase, may do many wicked things without loss of caste. He may pay his silly debts of honour in preference to his tradesman’s bills. He may run away with his friend’s wife, and offer him, by way of reparation, the chance of being killed, as well as injured in his feelings. But, at least, if he will steal his friend’s

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wife he will never steal his friend's purse ; and this same code of morals, which forbids a gentleman to take a bribe, is necessarily of the highest value in politics, where the dishonest influence of the capitalist requires most to be guarded against.

Look now at the other side of the picture. By admitting the rabble to legislative positions, where bribery must assail them, and assail them in their very weakest point, are we not doing the unwiseest possible thing both for ourselves and them ? Would not the world with one voice proclaim it madness if you appointed as judges on the bench men at two pounds a week—an excellent trades-union wage—to dispose of the lives and fortunes of their fellow-subjects ? And how can we expect honesty when we appoint men of that same standing to political office, where the temptations are equally great ? It would be trying poor Human Nature too highly.

The ideal of the proletariat is State employment. Of what this means they appear to have but an imperfect conception, for when the State becomes the universal employer, how do they suppose the question of strikes will have to be dealt with ? At present a workman strikes to better himself, and, if he is strong enough to exact higher wages from his employer, he gets them. But while, with everything nationalised, there is sure to be local discontent, what chance will the suffering workman or ten thousand workmen have of asserting themselves ? They will have the forces of the State arrayed against them—*i.e.* bayonets and Maxim guns ; for every act of disobedience will be treason to the State. And who is to settle the value of the infinite variety of brains in the community, if there is to be no competition ? Is there to

The Price of a Vote

be a universal wage as well as a universal eight-hours' day ? And are the drones and the workers, the wise men and the fools, the strong and the weak, the men with large families and the men with no families, to receive exactly the same treatment ? How strange that, after the working classes have fought and won their long battle for individual freedom, they should be holding out their hands once more for the manacles ! Who could have dreamt that the emancipated serf would clamour to be tied down again to the land, and that the independent workman would want a sentinel placed over him with a loaded rifle to see that he did not rob the community of a minute of his specified day's labour !

About our vaunted purity of election let us talk a little plain common sense. We are very proud of our electoral purity as established by an array of Acts of Parliament, the last of which was passed as recently as 1883, and we look back with Pecksniffian superiority upon the old days when votes could be openly bought for as little as a quart of beer apiece. There were all prices, of course. Much depended upon the traditions of the constituency. Probably there were a few voters in the old days who could not be had for less than five pounds a head, but they were the *élite*. The usual price was much less than that, and the law in its wisdom assumes that a glass of beer would buy the vote and interest of any single member of the masses whom we have admitted to the suffrage. This assumption does the masses no injustice, because, as a matter of fact, votes used to be bought wholesale on the terms mentioned, and doubtless could be again—nay, would be if the law allowed it. That being so, what is the value of a political verdict as determined by the ballot-

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box? The sovereign people bray forth their opinion at every general election, and fools tremble at the sound. But when we reflect that a little judicious expenditure of money could make the voters flock like sheep into one political camp or the other indifferently, it is permissible to doubt whether the popular really is the ultimate expression of political wisdom.

On general grounds I do not know that the openly corrupt method did not yield us as efficient a Parliament as that with which we are now blessed. It was under the old rotten borough system, at all events, that England rose to be a great Power. There was no time wasted then in hypocritical speechifying. The average man, or it may be even the superior man—superior by dint of education—bought his way into the House of Commons, and then voted upon the affairs of the nation as his intelligence directed him to do. Having secured his seat by payment or family interest, he felt himself free to exercise his judgment in political affairs. He did not care a straw for his constituents, who, as a matter of fact, did not know or care how he voted. He never spoke unless he had something to say. In short, the old rotten borough system gave us something like a *Conseil de Prud'hommes*, which is the ideal of the parliamentary system, though now unattainable. What is the case now? No member of Parliament is free to exercise his judgment. He is the delegate of a mass of nobodies, whose opinion on political questions is of so little account, so little rooted in intelligence or conviction, that the law assumes it to be purchasable for a glass of beer; and very wisely assumes it to be so purchasable, since that is the teaching of experience. Whether votes are bought, or whether they are

Bribery

not, their intrinsic value remains the same. I meet a fool in the street. He tells me he is going to vote for this or that candidate. I know, however, that for a drink he can be persuaded to vote on either side. Problem: What degree of respect am I supposed to entertain for what he is pleased to call his views? As this may seem a harsh judgment to pass upon one's fellow-citizens in the mass, I hasten to add that it is not my judgment, but the judgment of successive parliamentary majorities as embodied in election law. After all, is it so certain that bribery and corruption are got rid of, and that we do at length enjoy the unbiassed opinion of the masses for what it may be worth? The direct purchase of votes in money or kind has, no doubt, ceased. But what of those large and high-sounding promises that are made to this or that section of the electorate at election time by candidates of every stamp. If those pledges are not a sort of bribery and corruption, and just as pernicious a sort as the old, then words have lost their meaning. Our consolation in the matter must be that under all political systems, even the worst, we do get good men to serve the nation.

There is no getting away from inequality of some kind in the affairs of life; for, even under the law, cunning and guile may be trusted to get the better of innocence, just as the heavier fist is understood to carry with it the stronger argument. If you go deeper still—that is, to the metaphysics of the case—you will find that justice in its best form is only an imperfect attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, no two men probably being absolutely alike in their knowledge, their strength, their weaknesses, and their opportunities. Some lurking suspicion of this may be at the bottom of the liking shown by all races for the

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appeal to the 'test of battle' in its many forms. The cabman who proposes to fight his fare for the odd sixpence is not a metaphysician, but instinctively he feels that that is perhaps as fair a way of deciding the dispute as appealing to the tyranny of such facts as a magistrate might want to inquire into. I do not altogether agree with the cabman, but I feel, with him, that there may be a tyranny in mere facts which you have had no hand in arranging.

Legally speaking, the appeal to strength and skill as between individuals—it is still the law as between nations—was very slow in passing away. 'Trial by battle' remained on the English statute-book well into the present century. In the *Newgate Calendar* there occurs an example of it as late as the year 1817. A man named Thornton was accused of having outraged and murdered a young woman, whose friends, however, vainly tried to bring the crime home to him. After acquittal, he was re-arrested on appeal—a thing impossible nowadays—whereupon he availed himself of the privilege of demanding trial by 'wager of battle.' The custom was, it appears, that the accused and his accuser should be stripped and placed in a ring to fight with their fists till sundown. If the accused was overcome he was straightway ordered to be hanged, Providence being supposed to have decided against him; if, on the other hand, he overcame, or even killed his accuser, he was set free. In Thornton's case the difficulty was that he was 'an athletic man of great muscular power,' while his accuser was 'of a delicate frame and quite unequal to a personal combat with such an antagonist.' The injustice of the proceeding appears to have struck everybody, and no one more perhaps than

Property

the accuser, who shirked the proposed fight, so that the athletic Thornton finally regained his liberty, thanks to his muscular development.

All the signs point to the question of property as the battleground of the political parties of the future. Shall we then have a state of things essentially different from that which now prevails? Perhaps not. Society has always been made up of the 'haves' and the 'not-haves.' There have always been a slow party and a fast party; but although Tories and Radicals will continue to exist under other names, the conditions of the fight will be new and will be conducted more upon social lines or lines of property than has hitherto been the case. Whenever one class becomes predominant it sets about oppressing other classes who are not precisely of its own stamp. Yet, with all the lessons of history before our eyes, we must needs go and place supreme power in the hands of the working class, or, to be exact, the wage-earning class, the manual labourers, the toilers and moilers of the community. 'Oh, but these are not a class,' objects the philosophical politician, 'they are the people, the great majority of the country, whose numbers are a guarantee for their following a wise and just course.' Here, I am convinced, there is fallacy. Numerous or not, the wage-earners form a class, a well-defined class, with more than its fair share of prejudice and rapacity. Given a class, wage-earning or otherwise, you do not alter its nature by increasing its numbers. It matters not in the least whether a class consists of ten thousand or ten millions. Its members feel and think like one man. It takes many classes, however, to make a country, and the working men are no more England than any of the other classes which have had power in this

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country and have abused it. So in the new democratic era now opening up we are once more entering, I believe, upon a dreary round of class oppression and injustice, which in due time will result in another re-shuffling of the cards. In the ideal community there would be a delicate adjustment of responsibilities and a balancing of interests—and the power would not be intrusted to a single class, however numerous, more especially to a class whose work could largely be done by mechanical power. At the Falls of Niagara it is hoped, through electrical agency, to obtain no less than 450,000 horse-power. Think how many pairs of hands, how many working-class personalities are represented in such a gigantic output of mechanical force! What does the unskilled labourer contribute to the welfare of society that cannot be done by some delicately constructed machine deriving its motive power from the winds or the waters!

The foregoing considerations have an important bearing upon the qualification of the voter. In this country, as everybody knows, we long ago adopted, and still cling to, the money test. This we are gradually dropping under pressure of the democratic idea. Nevertheless, it is not a bad test, though, like all tests, it is liable to be abused. If a man manages his own affairs well, the presumption is that he will be able to manage creditably those of the nation. On the other hand, what are we to expect from the penniless ne'er-do-wells, and cranks, who profess Socialism? I am very far from saying that the possession of money implies intellectuality, though the literary man, I am sure, is too apt to underrate the mental qualities required for the amassing of a competence in other walks than his own. But money does certainly imply a number

Futility of Argument

of good citizenly qualities which the shirtless democrat is conspicuously without.

If we turn from the theory of political equality to its practice, as exemplified in Parliament, there is no more reason for satisfaction. The set debates in which it is now the parliamentary fashion to indulge on all great occasions have degenerated into mere displays of personal vanity, useless for all practical purposes. How useless is shown by the fact that the majority with which the Government enters upon the debate remains the majority at its close. That is the rule. Of course the debate may be critical, but in that case also the Whips can calculate to a nicety beforehand the numbers in the division, irrespective of the arguments employed. In a great debate, the Whips arrange the programme day by day. For every speaker on the Treasury bench one of corresponding calibre on the front Opposition bench has to be put up; for every ordinary Government supporter an Opposition ditto. Is all this contrived with a view to the elucidation of the question at issue? Not at all. This or that susceptibility has to be consulted. So-and-so wishes to speak, and, having a little influence, cannot be passed over. Down he goes on the list, accordingly. The whole thing becomes a talking match.

After it is all over, nobody is any wiser than before. Nobody is convinced by what he has heard on the opposite side. Argument indeed never convinces. If there is any human being who can be reasoned out of one set of convictions into another, I have still to meet him. The only effect of forcible argument is to make your opponent angry. If you are not forcible you merely confirm him in his views; and indeed this is the usual effect of his stating

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his own side of the question. It would not be too much to say that with most people the main object of argument is not to convince others but themselves. In the House of Commons the orator is appreciatively listened to only by those who agree with him. The chief preoccupation of the other side is how they may best answer him. Nobody in any party is trying to arrive at the truth. As all members now go up to Westminster pledged to one or other line of action, discussion can only be, so far as party issues are concerned, a waste of breath. Yet this strange phenomenon presents itself—that, while party pledges are more binding than they have ever been, the tide of talk rises higher and higher. Who supposes for a moment that anything that could be said on a given question by the Opposition would induce the leading member of the Government to get up and say, ‘Enough, gentlemen; you have placed this matter in a light in which I never saw it before. I see with you that this is a bad bill. Pray, allow me to withdraw it’?

Nor is the futility of argument peculiar to politics. What do you think would happen in the ranks of the many different religious sects if an archangel were suddenly to appear in their midst with an absolutely authoritative communication from the Most High to the effect that they were all on the wrong tack? Why, they would be nonplussed for a moment; then they would doubt their ears, or question the authenticity of the message. In a little while they would have argued themselves out of their perplexity, and in due time they would all be found going on as before, the fact being that particular classes of minds can only work in particular grooves, and that, dislodged from these, they make haste

Log-rolling

to jump into them again as an eel makes for its pond. A man whose opinions have been filched away from him, so to speak, in argument is in as uncomfortable a position as he whose clothes are stolen while he is bathing. He will get into a strange suit that is lent him, but the probability is that it will be a misfit, and he will be very glad indeed to come into his own again.

Talk, excessive talk, due to the publication of debates, counts for much in the deterioration of parliamentary institutions, and, in truth, we have travelled a long way from the original council of Prud'hommes, where each member had at heart the welfare of the community and spoke as the spirit moved him. But a still greater danger lurks in the log-rolling practices now evolved, whereby the whole principle of popular representation is warped and misapplied. An honest, straightforward vote on any given question it seems now impossible to obtain. Under the *régime* of the faddist and the log-roller the members who vote are not doing so in obedience to their convictions or their pledges, but because, in return for their unintelligent or unscrupulous support, they will obtain, when their time comes, similar support from other quarters. In other words, votes are now bought and sold in the House of Commons, not for money, but for considerations of another kind. 'Scratch me and I will scratch you,' is just as much of a bargain as an ordinary commercial sale or purchase regulated upon a money basis. The popular vote and the parliamentary system are comparatively recent devices for the government of nations, and it does not appear that the ancients, in failing to invent them, have forfeited to any great extent their reputation for wisdom.

CHAPTER XI

The Future of the Race—Are we Evolving?—Ancient Egyptian and Babylonian—Ten Thousand Years of History—The Decay of Civilisations—What is Knowledge?—Its Limits—Evolution up and Evolution down—Is this Nature's First Experiment?—Universality of Birth, Life, and Death.

WHAT will be the future of the race? The question is one that often presents itself to the speculative mind. Occasionally some religious fanatic, basing himself upon the prophecies of Daniel, ventures to answer it with day and date. Let us see what light science throws upon the mystery.

The amateur biologist is sometimes disheartened to find that no single step appears to have been taken in evolution within the period of time covered by human observation. Not only the human race, but all other existing species from the dog downwards, remain stationary. Of course, I pass by the nonsense talked by politicians about 'progress'—progress in our institutions, our mode of life, etc. Customs change, and ideas change; but these mean no more in relation to life than does the ripple on the surface of the water to the chemical constitution of that element. I refer to structural change; from which point of view all the existing races of men, from the Laplander to the Hottentot, would be classed as one, like the different breeds of dog or horse. Presumably it is all a matter of

Evolution

time. Although the untold ages of the world—twenty millions of years or thereabouts, say the physicists; a hundred millions, say the geologists—are neatly laid out in half a dozen periods, it is generally held that evolution has been continuous, and that we are even now evolving. I am inclined to think that the geologic periods really are periods, representing definite stages of evolution, that is to say, and that the great agent in the change of species is climate. It is well known that breeders of domestic animals can bring about considerable variations of species within a few generations; and change of climate, with all that that entails in the matter of food and habitat, would be the nearest approach under natural conditions to the moulding influence which the breeder brings to bear upon his stock. That no art has yet succeeded in mingling one distinct species with another—that nobody can breed a unicorn or a winged bull—is very true. But crossing is not Nature's way of producing variations of species. Every form of life is a gradual development from some higher or lower condition. There have been countless lines of radiation, so to speak, from the primordial cell, each species developing just as far, and no further, than the conditions allow in which it finds itself. While one line of development leads up to a Shakespeare or a Darwin, and all that may lie beyond, another stops short at the jelly-fish or the oyster.

So long as the present climatic conditions of the earth endure, there will probably be no variation of species to speak of, and the amateur biologist will look in vain for those modifications of type which a superficial study of Darwinism may have led him to expect. Curiously enough, there are despised forms of life which appear far

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more enduring than man, or any other of the 'nobler' animals. The lobster and the shrimp type, and the humble blackbeetle of our kitchens, go away back into the primary period, whenever that may have been. It was a strange world they lived in then. It must have been very warm and moist, for vegetation flourished luxuriantly, mosses, ferns, and such-like plants reaching a gigantic size, as is shown by the coal-beds which they helped to form. Moreover, this vegetation extended far into the Polar regions, where coal-seams have been found, and where only the most stunted form of plant life exists to-day. Possibly one reason why the lobster-like, or beetle-like, forms of life extend so far back is that they were peculiarly well adapted for preservation in the geological strata. A hard-shelled animal would remain, while a soft and pulpy one, with a fragile skeleton, would quickly disappear. We have, therefore, no sure evidence as to what varieties of life there may have been in the far-off primary period. With such a luxuriant vegetation as we know existed, and such a hot-house climate, it is highly probable that the lobsters and the beetles did not have it all their own way. They had spiders, and scorpions, and giant dragon-flies as their contemporaries; even the oyster, the self-same oyster, to all appearance, as may now be seen on the fishmonger's slab. Of the then world, in other respects, we know but little.

For an incalculable stretch of years, judging from the records of the geological strata, the climate must have remained far warmer and more productive than we have known it. How or when man came upon the scene science does not definitely tell us; but certainly the oldest human records throw no light upon evolution.

The Book of the Dead

In that wonderful *Book of the Dead*, issued by the authority of the Trustees of the British Museum, we are brought face to face with the most ancient products of the human mind, only to discover that the Egyptian of six or seven thousand years ago was very much the man of to-day, with a past of unknown extent to look back upon. The lesson of the *Book of the Dead*, in short, is that, while parties and generations come and go, the world shows very little trace of change within historic time.

When an ancient Egyptian died, his relatives inscribed on the walls of his tomb, on his coffin-lid, or on his swaddling-clothes, texts expressive of his hopes or fears with regard to the world to come; and human nature as we know it peeps out in connection with such transactions in the fact that the Egyptian undertakers used to keep in stock quotations from the *Book of the Dead*, executed in various degrees of richness and beauty, with blanks left for the name of the deceased to be filled in by his friends. Many of these rolls belong to the Theban and Ptolemaic periods, but even at that distant date they were ancient and venerable, internal evidence showing that the archaic forms of the texts presented difficulties to the transcribers.

If there was a remote original of these texts, it would not be rash, perhaps, to ascribe it to a period of at least ten thousand years ago. Considering how slowly the ancient world must have moved, how slowly the East moves to-day, such an estimate must be well within the mark. Even so, civilisation could not then have been in its infancy, for there is constant allusion in the book to the soul being weighed in the balance of Thoth, 'according to the decree uttered unto him by the company of the

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gods,' and balances are not the invention of the savage mind. In fact there is much in this remote religion of the Egyptian tombs that prefigures Christianity; the soul, for instance, on entering the presence of the supreme god being represented as saying, 'There is no sin in me; I have not lied wittingly, nor have I done aught with a false heart': while an attendant spirit observes, 'His heart is found righteous coming forth from the balance, and it hath not sinned against god or goddess; therefore grant him cakes and wine, and let him enter into the company of the blessed.'

I do not know how it may strike the reader, but there is to me something eminently soothing and consolatory in the contemplation of the records of that far-off time, further beyond Homer than Homer is from our own day. Sometimes one regrets not being born a hundred years later. Little inventions of one kind and another have been crowding upon us so fast during the last generation or two that one fancies that in another hundred years or so all the secrets of Nature will have been unlocked, and the solution of the great riddle found. But will it be so? Ten thousand years ago there were the same manner of men on earth as ourselves, striving, like us, to peer behind the veil, and seeing just as little.

Has such a change come over the spirit of things that the men of ten thousand years hence will be so very much more in advance of us than we are in advance of the original authors of the *Book of the Dead*? I cannot think so; and, do you know, that is a comforting thought. It will never be well for men to be as gods, knowing good and evil. If ever a day comes when man finds that he is not surrounded by a wall of mystery, when the veil

Our Boasted Achievements

lifts in any direction so that he can be sure of seeing the true scope and purpose of the universe, it will, I am convinced, be a sorry day. The human mind is always abashed and depressed in the presence of demonstrated fact. It is at its best when it soars in speculation; it nourishes itself on hope.

There need be no fear that science is going to tell us too much. If we just step aside out of the focus of the electric light in which we moderns stand, we shall see that science has still told us so little that it is hardly worth considering. Her boasted achievements, if we look into them, may all be summed up in a phrase—the identification and the application in a small way to our own little uses of various forms of Energy. We perceive that there is an all-pervading Energy in the universe, manifesting itself alike in the smallest blade of grass that grows and in the mightiest sun that sweeps on its unknown course through space. But as to what that Energy is—how caused, how maintained, why existent—as to the essentials of the problem, in fact, we know just as little as the ancient Egyptian knew, and our proper attitude in presence of the grand secret is his attitude as revealed in these seared and tattered papyri—humility.

After all, in what respect can we consider ourselves superior to the ancient Egyptian? He has left us, in this *Book of the Dead*, traces of a religion as lofty in conception as a great deal of that which sways the world to-day; while in the Sphinx, which has been gazing across the desert these five thousand years or more, there are exemplified principles of art which we have never improved upon, and in the Pyramids engineering skill which the builders of the Tower Bridge respect and

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admire. The rest of the Egyptian civilisation is a blank ; the effacing fingers of Time have swept over almost the entire slate. But what will be left of us and our civilisation for the inspection of the human race ten thousand years hence ? Perhaps not a stock, or a stone, or an idea.

The same lesson is taught us by the Babylonian records. From evidence of different kinds we can fix the period at which Babylonian civilisation attained its height as about five thousand years ago. The ancient Babylonians had by that time carried their arts and their system of writing as high as they could go—or at least as high as they ever went—and Egypt was a civilised neighbour standing on about the same rung of the ladder. It is curious to speculate as to what social or political relations obtained between the Egyptians and the Babylonians, and with what eyes both looked out upon the universe in that far-off time. Very likely, if the truth were known, there was not much difference between their view of things and ours, for they were men like unto ourselves ; and, of fundamental truths unknown to them, what we have learnt is immaterial. It is through different channels, however, that a knowledge of Babylon and ancient Egypt has come to us. Egypt we know through its tombs. The Babylonians burnt their dead, and our acquaintance with them is derived from inscriptions in the temples, on vases, and, most remarkable fact of all, from the thousands of clay tablets that have been dug up representing the business life of the people—contracts, receipts, acknowledgments of debt, and so on. Imagine the history of England in the nineteenth century having to be inferred from collections of tradesmen's bills ! Yet this is what has been done with Babylonia, and it is remarkable how

The Accumulation of Knowledge

much can be learnt from so unpromising a source. In art, morals, poetry, what do we know that has not been known for thousands of years? It is otherwise with physics. Here knowledge is, unquestionably, progressive. The rawest student is the heir of all the ages. He steps into possession of a vast amount of knowledge to which Sir Isaac Newton himself was a stranger.

But, after all, does the accumulation of knowledge matter? Is it so very much more important than those arts which minister to the mere happiness of life? It is the fate of all civilisations to decay, and with them probably dies the greater part of their knowledge. How many of them may have died without leaving the smallest trace in stock or stone, nobody knows. It is as certain as anything can be, that the solar system, as it is, is not Nature's first attempt at evolution; and as the duration of this system could be, nay, has been, calculated, it is absurd to suppose that the universe either began with our epoch or that it will end with it. Knowledge is merely the appanage of particular races, ceasing to exist as soon as they have played their little part upon the stage of history. At the best it is only an attempt—for the most part a very imperfect attempt—to discover and to chronicle an already existing condition of things. Assuming that electricity, for instance, exists, what does it matter in the great cosmic scheme how much we may happen to find out about it? A great man may bring out this or that fact, may light upon this or that generalisation; but in the end what does it signify how near we may get to the ultimate truth, since the one and only consideration of importance is that, outside of us and independently of us, the truth exists? While the highest members of the

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human race were only naked savages, all the wonderful 'science' of the universe that excites our admiration and baffles our skill was going on just as it does now, and as it will do after the human race is no more. The achievements of science have consisted in the discovering of small and isolated facts here and there in the established order of things. The record of these facts is what we call knowledge, and it is really so small as hardly to be worth considering. We are standing on a small illuminated spot, in the midst of the Unknown. Above us, beneath us, all around us, impenetrable mystery.

That evolution tends to what we call improvement there is no saying. We can only suppose matter to have been endowed, in the beginning, with certain properties which act and react upon each other according to circumstances. One effect of the process we see is the jelly-fish or the flowering plant or the man-eating savage ; and another, the astronomer with his eye at the telescope speculating upon the movement and the constitution of suns. From this point obviously there may be evolution down as well as evolution up. Let us suppose that, through pressure of population, there should come in the world an actual scarcity of food. The fight for life would become very severe. All the laws regulating property would be strained to snapping-point. Existing society would fall to pieces, to be reconstituted, perhaps, on some new basis—with combinations, say, on the part of the powerful and the unscrupulous to oppress and oust the weak. All the petty refinements of leisured life would disappear, together with all the arts and, perhaps, all the sciences, except those immediately concerned with the production or transport of food, in which there would

Extinction of the Human Race

probably be a prolonged boom. After an indefinite period of this struggle for life, it is easy to conceive that both morally and physically the human race would become vastly changed—better or worse just as you might choose to regard it. You might call that relapsing into barbarism, for there are people who identify civilisation with playing the piano and doing a little Berlin wool-work, while I might prefer to describe it as the development of a hardier and more virile race.

The most certain fate to be predicted for mankind is gradual extinction. Many species, even within our own time, have become extinct, wiped out by enemies, and once a type is gone Nature never renews it. So infinite are her resources that no pattern, no number of patterns, matters. That we can read clearly in the great book. And it may be that man, a late arrival, probably subsequent to the Ice Age—which *may* not have been more than twenty or thirty thousand years ago—is destined to a far shorter run of the earth than the cockroach or the lobster. Another ice epoch would hardly kill him, since he would retreat before the glaciers into the tropics, where the ice, it is believed, has never been. Nor is it easy to conceive of any existing mammal getting the better of him, or of the sea yielding some amphibious monster which would do battle with him successfully, though *that* is on the cards. But he might easily succumb to the hosts of his invisible enemies in the microbe world. At present they seem to be kept in check by atmospheric and other conditions, for the few that we are beginning to fight with serum hardly count. But another radical change in the earth's climate might put an entirely different face upon matters.

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Suppose some new epidemic swept over the face of the earth, or an old one were revived, under unprecedentedly virulent conditions, how should we stand? With all our science we know little enough about epidemics. That each is the work of a particular microbe or combination of microbes is certain. But what is it that gives the microbe its chance one year rather than another? Why does cholera set out on its travels at stated intervals from its home in the Ganges delta? Why is there an influenza cycle? Why a year for measles, and another for small-pox? The answer must be that some subtle change in the climatic or atmospheric conditions which we are unable to perceive favours the propagation of one or other of the many species of our invisible foes. If the influenza microbe, to name no other, had a free run it could destroy the entire human race in a month, and the last victim would know no more about the scourge than the first.

That the physical end of the world, the destruction of the globe and all its contents, will come is certain, the only points left in doubt being when and how. In the Book of Nature, as spread out before us in the starry depths, we see (using all the appliances of modern astronomy) that suns and planetary systems are not eternal, but that they evolve, flourish, and decay. 'Birth, life, death' appears to be the rule of the universe at large as well as our own little corner of it. What is more, the process is everywhere pretty much the same. Birth and death are contemporaneous. If there is a sun and a system dying, there is another being born. Are old suns and systems broken up and made into new? That we have no actual proof of, but it is highly probable. On earth new generations of living things are being constantly recreated out of

The End of the World

the materials of the old ; and throughout the universe the evolutionary processes are remarkably similar. Obviously the process of recreating on the larger scale would consist in a break-up of the worn-out suns and systems whereby they would once more be restored to a purely gaseous state like the *nebulæ*. Then indeed would the heavens be gathered up as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat ; but it is extremely unlikely that there would by that time be left any living soul on the earth to see it.

The most probable end of the world, as far as the human race is concerned, is that in process of time the earth, like the moon, will become unfit to support life. It will be a very slow process, we may be sure—a process extending over hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of years ; and as intelligence will probably decay as life becomes more and more reduced, the end will be unnoticed. Nature, as a rule, is not violent in her methods ; and it is extremely likely that that will be her method with us, so closing an experiment the most obvious lesson of which is that the individual counts for nothing in the history of the race, the race for nothing in the life of the planet, and the planet for nothing in the duration of the universe.

THE END

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